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CHRIST IN THE CENTURIES

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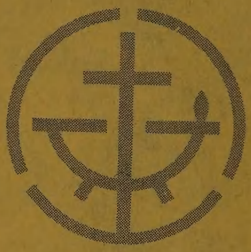

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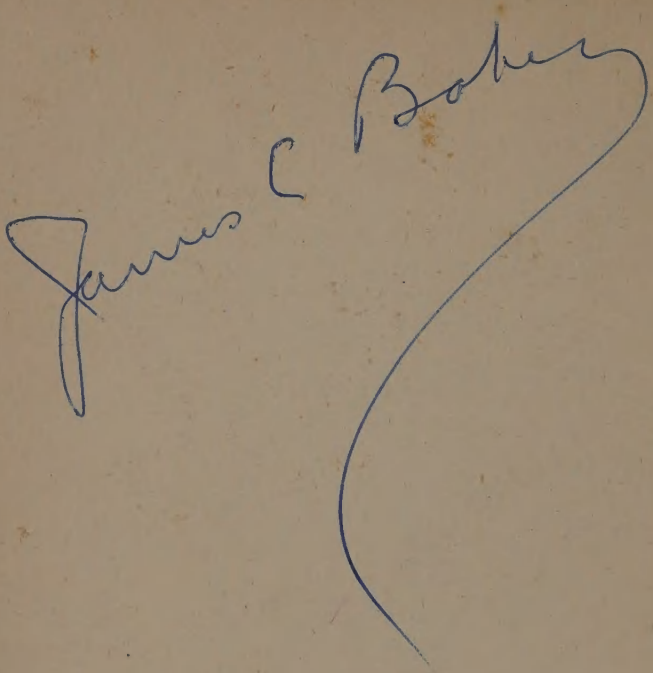
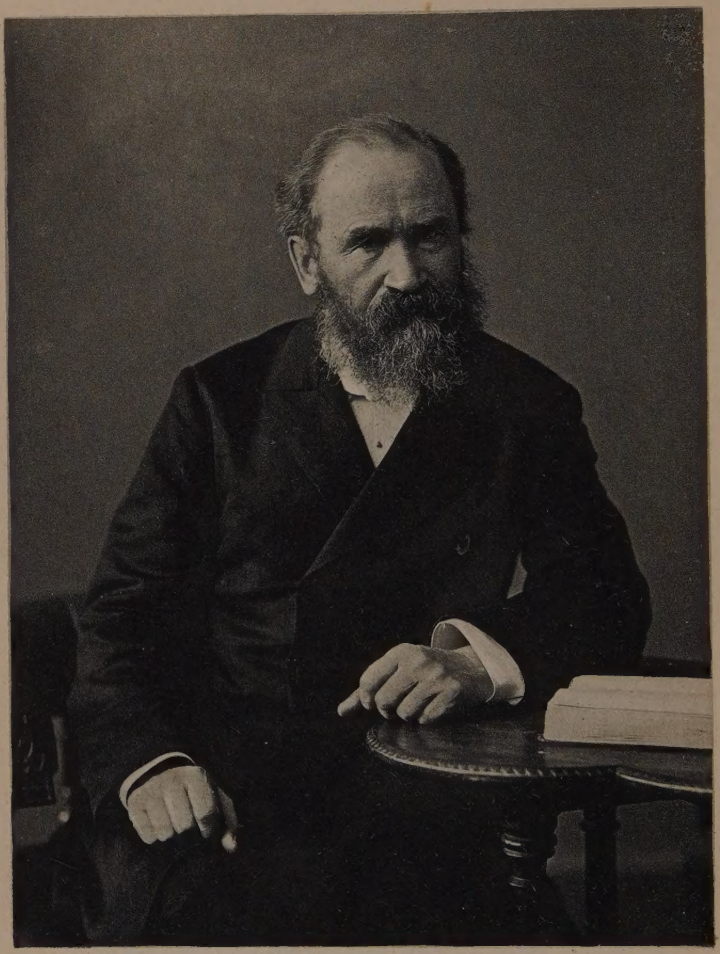


Preachers of the Age

A. M. FAIRBAIRN, M.A., D.D.



Yours faithfully
A. M. Ramsay

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CHRIST IN THE CENTURIES

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

A. M. FAIRBAIRN, M.A., D.D.

PRINCIPAL OF MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD

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Preached in Free St. George's Church, Edinburgh, Sunday evening, December 20, 1891.

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—JOHN i. 17.

THESE words state a fact which the history of man has verified. Judaism was a witness to the law which came by Moses; the Christian Church and the pious souls of all the Christian centuries are witnesses to the grace and truth which have come by Jesus Christ. But these words have been read not that they may be explained, but that they may help us the better to discuss how the century in which He came and the century in which we live at once agree and differ in their apprehension of Him.

The life of Christ is one thing, and His history is another. While the life was lived in Judæa, the history is as long and as extended as Christendom. The life He lived in Judæa is written in the Gospels. The life He has lived in the world is represented by the history of civilized man. And before He can be known these two must be combined. If we would understand Him, our view must not be limited to the Gospels, or to His thirty years in Judæa, or to the first half of the first century of our

era. Without these, indeed, He is not to be understood, but still less is He to be understood if they alone are regarded. The exhibition of His action in history is the exposition of His importance. We must look at the centuries that have come after Him, and His action in these centuries, if we would know either whom or what He is. This means that He cannot be construed in isolation, but only through His place in the collective history of man, by means of His work in, on, and for our whole human kind.

But if Christ be so regarded He will be seen to be no accident or creation of chance. History is a realm of law; in it order reigns, though it seems of all realms the least ordered. If, indeed, we confine our gaze to a moment in time, or a point in space, what we see looks but the conflict or collision of opposing wills; the strife of men and of interests struggling for life. Out of this pitiless and sordid struggle it would seem as if no order or progress could come; all appears a confusion which can only become worse confounded. But if we extend our gaze from the single moment and the solitary point to the course and tendency of history, then we shall see that these wrestling and colliding wills have occupied a vaster time and contended on an immenser arena than their own time and place, and have fulfilled a function and a purpose far beyond themselves. They have contributed to what no single will out of all the multitude regarded as a motive or conceived as an end; they have helped forward the development of society and hastened the progress of man. They have lived for self, yet have served the purposes and fulfilled the order of God.

But if law reigns in history, it acts through persons.

Every good that enters the world, enters through an individual—a conscious, reasonable, moral man; and it depends on the quality of the man what measure of good he brings. The more he has in him of God, the greater the degree and the intenser the form in which the divine enters the common life. If, then, there is in history a law of progress and order, fulfilled by means of persons, it follows that He who creates or sends the persons is the primary and ultimate cause of the order and the progress.

To say, therefore, that there is such law, is to say that persons fit for the moment and the place are ever being sent; but this is the same thing as saying that they do not come by chance, that they are not made by accident. If the reason or the will that fulfils itself in history, does it by the persons it forms, it is evident that the most necessary person of history must be held to be the least accidental or the most designed. Man did not make him, nor did chance; the only one who could is He who reigns over all history, and is King because He is Creator of all.

But the point where He most distinctly, because directly and essentially, entered within the course of human affairs, was in the Person who has been the most potent force in their direction, the most efficient factor of their development. Who this Person is does not admit of dispute. Christ Jesus is His name. He has made Himself felt in every moment and in every movement, nay, we may say in every man and mind, since He lived. All our modern order is His creation; every moral quality which distinguishes the modern from the ancient world is due to Him. We may, therefore, infer that, as the Person who has been most efficient in the creation of order, Jesus Christ is the most ordered Person in history; that, as He who has done most

to create progress, He most expresses the will that works in all for all. By causing God to be realized in history He is proved to be God manifest in the flesh.

It may be helpful if we try to bring this action—and, as a consequence, this significance—of Christ before our minds in a concrete form, by comparing Him as He was in the first with what He is in the nineteenth century. We shall then have one brief note in the testimony of time to the quality of His Person and the cause of His coming.

I.

There is more reason than may at once appear for bringing these two centuries together. They have more in common than may seem outwardly the case. The nineteenth is, at the heart of it, not so very remote from the first at its heart. The nineteenth century is nearer Christ than the second, the second is more distant from Him than the nineteenth. If you think this a thing all too strange, it can only be because you have forgotten that great things grow but slowly into the mind, and it is only as they enlarge the mind that they grow intelligible to it; in other words, it is but in proportion as Christ is formed in us that we are able to form an adequate conception of Him. Now, the men of the second century had too little of Christ within them to understand the Christ without; there was too much of the old Jew or the ancient pagan in their mind and feeling to allow them to look as with open face upon Him who had come from God. Take, for example, the literature of the second century as it concerns Christ and compare it with the literature of the nineteenth that has the same concern. At the opening of the second stand writers like Hermas and

Barnabas and Ignatius and the author of the "Didaché." Here are men, one of whom dreams dreams and sees visions strangely mingling old and new, superstition and faith—a sort of primitive Bunyan, but much more crude and credulous than the later and maturer, with much less knowledge both of the sources and facts and doctrines of his religion. Another construes the Old Testament in a very strange and arbitrary way, without adequate knowledge or insight, while he feebly echoes Paul, but in a manner so distant as well as feeble as to be hardly articulate. A third speaks about the necessity of some overseer or president or bishop as needful to order in a Church, showing the while distinctly more comprehension of what his faith means than the other two. And a fourth describes, simply but not very coherently, the wandering prophet who has taken the place of the ancient priest, and the forms under which we celebrate the remembrance of the Master. But have you in these writers any adequate view of the Founder as He lived, or any insight into the contents and meaning of the religion He founded such as you have in the apostolic age and again in our own? On the contrary, the very thing you would most expect is absent; what you least expect is there. It is as it were the vernacular tradition of the time petrified, and so preserved, with all of its original vagueness and much of its original bewilderment.

But now, come down to the end of the century and take writers like Irenæus and Tertullian. In Irenæus you have plenty of knowledge of Gnostics, like Basilides and Valentinus; indeed, the whole band of speculators and most of their speculations as to æons, or beings intermediary filling up the immense interspace between the spiritual invisible God and the sensuous visible man, stand chaotically yet

graphically represented in those books of his against the heresies. Again in Tertullian you have everything on a grander scale, a much vaster and a much more mixed and dramatic scene. A Christian apologist, he is yet an accuser of the emperor; a Christian advocate who finds evidence of religion in the natural heart of man; an enemy of heretics, Marcion, Hermogenes, Praxeas, always satirically describing the heresy he dismisses. As an apologist he does not cease to be an advocate—is rhetorical, forensic, impassioned, now in a natural, now in an extravagant way, even to the verge of what would seem in another man the forced and the simulated. These men are invaluable as historical witnesses. When they speak of things contemporary they are first-hand authorities. Their own times live in them. You can look through these two men as through a microscope at the living subject, and see the times they lived in and the men in whom the times lived; but what of primary first-hand knowledge of the Great Person of the faith? That is the very last thing they have to give you. There is faith in Him; there is interpretation of Him; there is wonderful insight into some aspects of His Person and work and meaning; there is the sort of appeal you always expect and mostly find, where a lawyer is concerned, to a rule or tradition which is meant to say or to do or seem great things, though it says remarkably little. But, measured by the standard that governs our ideals of knowledge to-day, all is scanty, obscure, defective. It is primitive, but not primary; it is near in time, but distant in mind and knowledge; it is initial, but not final; and if we could not pass beyond these, we should never accurately know what Christ had been, what Christ had done—in a word, insight into His mind and life, into what the central

facts of His Person, Passion, and death mean would be to us largely denied.

Now, this will not appear wonderful if you look at the matter as reasonable men; for the earliest stage in any historical development is not the most but the least perfect. It is the time of the hard bud or the green blade, not of the ripe fruit or the full corn in the ear. These men, as witnesses of history, are invaluable; as authorities in faith they are altogether out of place. They did their work, as far as their knowledge and opportunities permitted, dutifully and well; but they were true sons of their land and time, and could be nothing else. In them their Roman or Greek, their Asiatic or African world lived, and they saw and thought but as they could. Yet one thing they may help you to do: when you compare them with the apostles and the writers of the New Testament, you will note the wondrous wisdom of the Master in the men whom He chose. These were unlearned men. Those who look at the surface may think that in choosing the unlearned He deeply erred. But study the matter, and see how pre-eminent His wisdom. The last homes of reaction are ever learned societies; the least progressive forces in the world dwell where exclusive culture claims to have its peculiar and charming home. The men that can least see things as they are, are men who have been biassed by a system of education that gives them a perverted, because a partial and prejudiced view of life. For, as in signal illustration, where did paganism in its decadence find its last refuge? Men say often, "In the villages," and hence it is spoken of as "paganism" in the country, and hence "heathenism." But the cultured heathenism of Greece and Rome had its last home in the ancient schools. The "rhetors"—the men

who taught grammar and rhetoric and eloquence; the men who thought they had succeeded to the literature of Greece and to the eloquence of Rome—formed as it were the rear-guard of retreating and vanquished polytheism, and their schools were the last refuge of the dying paganism. They said, "Think of the old gods, think of the old temples: what beautiful tales we can tell of the old deities, who are bound up with all that is highest and most imaginative in our literature! Did not the mythology which tells of their adventures, their loves and hates, their splendid forms and wondrous powers, their Olympian councils and feasts, with the flowing nectar and divine ambrosia, furnish material to Homer? Did it not give everything they used to our tragic poets? Where would our Æschylus, our Sophocles, our Euripides, have been had there been no mythology, no ancient deities? Then think of the gracious processions we used to see move down our temple aisles, glide out and in among our temple pillars. Think of the blaze of lighted candles at the mysteries, and the appeal made to spirit through sense at our worship! Æstheticism, culture, all the fineness of our ancestral feeling, all our wealth of classic fancy, all the delicacy of spirit we call culture, bind us to our pagan worship, and we turn with scorn from this vulgar and illiterate and unimaginative Christian belief."

But Christ took for His apostles men of a nobler order, leaving those made after this pattern of conscious exquisite excellence to be broken and reformed by hard fact. He left time to deal with them; but He called from the boat and the loom and the receipt of custom the men He needed. He took them into His confidence; He guided them into solitude; He let His own transcendent influence play upon

heart, transform imagination, fill reason, penetrate mind : till in the translucent air He made about their spirit He lived and was seen as He was ; and they were able to describe and to tell to all after-ages the wondrous Person they had seen, the glorious Christ they had known. The priest would have lost Him in rites and seasons and sacrifices, in questions of inheritance and succession, of orders and descent ; the Pharisee would have buried Him in ceremonial and oral tradition ; the scribe would have covered Him over with scholastic formulæ. The men He called and the men He made gave Him as He lived, showed reflected in the clear and truthful mirror of loving memories and words His inmost spirit, His veritable soul.

This is no mere picture of the imagination which has been submitted to you. It is sober truth, and this you will see if you compare Christ as reflected in the minds He made, with the Christ who was made by later and more formal minds. In other words, study the action of the cultured upon the apostolic conception of Christ. Take just a few examples indicative of the line and degree of change. There is the line represented by all the ideas that centre in the priesthood. The essence of a priesthood is that the priest stands ever as the necessary medium between God and man, and between man and God. Now, no person ever was so open and accessible as Jesus. He was so open and accessible that the little child loved to be taken into His arms, and in His arms the mother loved to place her child ; the woman that was an outcast, hated of all who believed themselves to be good, sought help from Him ; and one despaired of by all physicians found in Him help and obtained from Him healing. The publican whom the Pharisee would not own as a Jew—hardly as a man ; the

sinner that the superfine scribe could only see as a moral leper not to be touched by a gentle hand: all who were forsaken and forgotten by the pre-eminently representative and pious persons of the day, found access to Him. He loved to be sought, and He loved to be found. And when He founded His society He stood within it as open and accessible as He had lived, asking only that men be directed to Him. It is wonderful that He never speaks of other temple than the temple which is His body. It is wonderful that He does no priestly act, asserts no priestly claim during His life. He, indeed, in His great high-priestly office, carries the sacrifice of time into eternity; but the priesthood being one is universal, universalized by being embodied in one Person who has His home in heaven. And in His society He expressed this open and accessible attitude of His in the most solemn and emphatic way. He never appointed any man as priest with the priest's name to stand as necessary medium between Him and man, full in His road to man, full in man's road to Him.

But when men accustomed to priestly faiths and to ornate religions came into the Christian Church, they felt, as it were, its emptiness to them—possibly some may even have spoken of its squalor. Ceremonies were not; nor the outer pomp, the vestments and actions which adorned the office for the priest, and enabled the priest to adorn the office. And so by-and-by the men who felt the vacancy or bareness of a worship which knew not these things, brought in the idea and the name of priest, and with him all the furniture which he so loves, and which constitutes to him religion. And by-and-by they changed the sacrifice which at first was of the living body, or the living man, or the Spirit, or the service by brother of brother, into

the sacrifice which they call "of the Mass," or "of the sacrament of the altar." The only altar Christ knew was the altar of the pure heart, the altar where the living God Himself did dwell. But when they ceased to understand His mind they changed His worship. And they surrounded Him with various influences that shut out man, and made it difficult for man to reach Him. But happily we are not dependent on decadent ages for our knowledge of Him; we have ever with us the imperishable source which accompanies us down the ages, and has come straight from the men His own hands had formed.

II.

We must bring the two points together, His day and our own, and compare Him as He appeared then and as He appears now.

Now, mark how He appeared then outwardly. His life was brief, His rank was humble, His estate was poor, His condition was unlettered, His city was a mean city, His whole apparent bearing seemed to the outer critical eye mean and insignificant. Then note what He did. First, He was taken to be a rabbi—a teacher. As teacher He was heard, visited, questioned, disputed with. His words—such of His words as survive—we have; we attempt to know what they mean; we seek to enter into their sense and import. Then He was a living Presence of healing. He loved to lift the burden of disease from the spirit and the body of man. Where His gentle hand touched, there health came. Then He appears as One who purges the temple, One who will not allow the house of God to be made a home of merchandise; and the

opposition which had been of old time from the Pharisees passes now into the opposition of the priests. They will not allow their claim to be denied or their domain to be invaded. The man who touches their prerogatives touches the eye of God, and must by God's law be made to die. So they prepare the cross for Him. The priests demand it; the awful sacrifice has priestly sanction, though it be the sanction of a priest who has forgotten his vocation of God, and made his office his and not God's. So He is led out to die, and dies the death of the cross, forsaken by His friends and mocked by His pitiless enemies.

But in the course of His brief life He has fashioned and trained a small society, the band of men that learned from Him; and when He rises and ascends they remain. And with them His activity assumes new forms, causing two streams of tendency to spring up. The one stream of tendency is radical opposition to Him. As to the hate of the Pharisee the hate of the priest had succeeded, so the hatred of the Master became the inheritance of the disciples. The men who crucified the Lord hastened to make martyrs of His servants. When the faith passes beyond Judæa it enters into new circles of hate. At Rome a Nero finds it; and Nero makes persecution attempt its extinction. At Rome a great historian sees it; and he describes it as "a detestable superstition." In the further East a great writer who was also a Roman governor sees it; and while despising the "extravagant superstition," yet he cannot help a grudging and reluctant admiration for the simple men whom he describes as singing praise to Jesus as to a God. Later a cultured philosopher, conscious of his own superfine knowledge and divine philosophy, curiously studies this new religion as a thing to be wondered at,

one of the many delusions that haunt the human mind; looks at it, speculates on the absurdity of the slave and the woman and the porter who will really think that for their sakes God became incarnate in a Jew and died on the cross. And he makes merry over them, and compares them to an army of frogs sitting round a pond, and saying as they croak, "We are the favourites of God; the God who is in heaven loves us." Over against him stands another son of culture, scornful to the Philistines of his day, a satirical poet. He writes a poem describing the adventures of an impostor. This impostor imposes on the Christians, a body of men and women who are mere simpletons, for they spend their time in visiting prisons, in helping the sick, in relieving the distressed, and do not too curiously distinguish between the impostor on the one hand, and the sincere and veracious on the other. Thus did statesmen and historians, men of science and of culture, then judge. They looked at Christ from without, and He was to them as one despised; and the people that loved Him were despised with Him. Ask the men of light and the men of leading, "What think ye of the new religion which has come out of Judæa and from among the Jews?" and Tacitus, and Pliny, and Trajan, and Lucian, and Celsus all join in the common reply, "This Christian faith is a thing beneath our very scorn, a superstition of base-born and mean men."

So much for the one tendency; let us now look at the other, which is one of absolute devotion at once to Jesus and to man. It was a stream which Christ Himself created and guided. It was something more wonderful than the hate. It was a stream of living men whose course was ruled by love. These men He had of His own making,

He selected from their low occupations—how did they think concerning Him? They knew Him; had heard Him, had followed Him. Their hands had handled Him; they had watched Him on the cross; their fingers had been put into the very wounds and nail-prints. They lived in the hate that marked the years after His death, and felt it to the bitter full. These men, knowing Him thus, were yet Jews. They believed God; they believed one only God. Like Jews they had placed over against the God in whom they believed mortal man—dying, vanishing, ever liable to decay and to death. Between man and God the gulf was infinite, and to their minds the gulf could not be bridged. God was in heaven, men upon the earth, and the distance between them, the depth on the one side, the height on the other, remained such as neither the might of God nor the energy and the ambition of man could cross or scale. But these very men came to conceive and to describe the Christ they knew thus—that He is Son of God, equal with God, according to the Spirit descended from God; He is one with the Father; to see Him is to see the Father; He is the Word, the Creator, the Light of the world, the Life of the world, the One in whom the world's redemption centres, through whose sufferings and death the world's deliverance has been accomplished. And for this faith of theirs they live, yet are ready to die.

III.

We have seen, then, how the men of the first and second centuries thought and judged; let us now hear the judgment of time. There are the two views. One is the view of the world's then culture, of its power, of its schools

of learning, of its thrones of might. The other is the view of men called from the boat, and the nets, and the lake, and the loom, and the custom-house. Now, time is a great critic. History is an awful judge. Before its tribunal men are called, causes are called, religions are called; and day by day that inexorable judge delivers his judgments, and against them no one can stand. What, then, O history, is thy judgment in this case? Was Celsus or was Paul, was Lucian or was John, was Pliny or was James, was Tacitus or was Peter, right relative to this faith and this Christ? Ask to-day, Where does He stand? What are the Churches? They represent millions of men, and when all just deductions are made from Buddhism—which owns not the whole of China, only a poor third—the Christian Churches contain more of the children of men than any other religion under heaven. But the numerical is a poor test, poorest of all known to the wit of man. Shall we appeal, then, to character, quality, spirit? What is Islam? The religion of nomadic tribes that when they forsake the desert waste civilization. What is Brahmanism? The religion of an iron caste that confines as in an inflexible mould a society that cannot escape from its iron and immovable casement. What is Buddhism? A religion that emasculates, that enervates men; and that by dividing life into what is evil—to wit, all effort, and what is good, to wit, all surrender of will—magnifies and glorifies the very impotencies of time. But where stands Christ? At the head of the peoples that lead the civilization of the world, reigning with greatest power where the peoples are most free; most honoured where the knowledge is widest. He reigns—as no god of Rome, as no deity of Greece, as no divine being of Egypt or India, ever has reigned, ever could reign—over

civilized, free progressive men. Then let us mark a further thing. The greatest things these peoples have done they have done through Him and at His inspiration. They have created a great republic in a world which used to be called new; they have peopled that world with progressive and industrious men, who have dared to redress a great wrong and set millions of the enslaved free. *He* led the exodus from the Old World; *He* gave the impulses to the Pilgrim Fathers in the strength of which their sons have created all that is orderly and organizing in the New World. And here, in our midst, what does He do? Do we pity the criminal, purge and purify the prison? We do it at *His* bidding. Do we pity the sufferer and build the hospital, and equip the physician and endow him with all that he asks for in order that he may heal? We do it because Christ bids us. Do we liberate the slave, and say that no man shall be bond, the chattel or the goods of another? Then we do it because He commands us and inspires us to set free the men He redeemed. Do we send men as the men of the first century went out to those we call the heathen; do our sons go forth from our homes and our seats of learning, and with all the culture of the age upon them, bury themselves by the lakes of Africa, or by the swamps of India, or by the great rivers of China? Then they do it because He commands and they obey. Look at fact and ask, Do we stand in the presence of fiction? Has this great fulfilment of the word the men spoke who knew the Master no meaning but one of mistake and misleading? Does it not rather mean this—He who lived in the Person of the Christ, and has ever since acted through Him, is one with the Master and Maker and Ruler of the world?

But that is only one side of a great theme. The men

have risen out of that distant age—our first and our second century—who were the famed men of letters of their day. We, too, can call up letters that surpass in their imaginative quality and equal in their speculative power the classical literatures of Greece and Rome; and when these letters rise obedient to our call, is it not to say that He is so woven into our very thought that our poetry cannot be without Him, so built into our very being that our history cannot be written without Him and His deeds? So penetrated are our minds by Him that our philosophies end in an attempt to read His meaning. So does He fill the space between man and God that our theologies begin with Him, end with Him, read God and the universe all through Him. Has not grace, has not truth, come by Jesus Christ? Say, is there any comment on the first century equal to the nineteenth? Do not go back to the second, and think you can see Him there. Stand where you are; look at Him as He is, and as you feel round you tides of life that rise and that ebb at His presence and command,—confess that history has risen to vindicate truth, that history lives to vindicate grace, and that in Him hath dwelt, still dwells, all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.

Preached at the opening of the new Emmanuel Congregational Church, Barry Road, East Dulwich, Wednesday evening, June 10, 1891.

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."—1 Cor. i. 22–24.

This chapter is full of the tragic pathos of the apostle's life. We can read, as it were between the lines, the emotions, the hopes, the despairs, the fears, the loves, amid which he preached in Corinth, confronted by the hate of the Jew and the scorn of the Greek, and beset by the jealousies, the divisions, the misunderstandings, of his heathen and Hebrew converts. But these things could neither damp his ardour nor quench his courage. His world was in almost everything a contrast to ours, and so in many respects was his religion. The Christian of to-day can but ill understand the Christian of the year 50. Perhaps if he did he would often feel much more as did the Greek, or the Jew, than as did the Christian. We are, for one thing, actively engaged in trying to perfect the worship of God into the last and most exquisite of the Fine Arts. We demand that it "lap us in soft Lydian airs;" we measure its

fitness by its beauty, and we think it good in proportion as it is agreeable. The test of its excellence may even at times be the sensuous pleasure it can give or the degree of æsthetic enjoyment it can be made to afford. We think less of the awfulness of God and of the worship of Him by mortal and sinful man, than of the elegance and the harmony of all the parts of what we are pleased to call the service. The greatest of the Puritans was familiar with the cloistered walk and pale ; he loved

> ". . . the high embowèd roof,
> With antique pillars massy proof,
> And storied windows richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light."

He loved also to hear

> ". . . the pealing organ blow
> To the full-voiced choir below,
> In service high and anthems clear,
> As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
> Dissolve me into ecstasies,
> And bring all heaven before mine eyes."

But he came to feel that there were sublimer things than these sensuous sweetnesses. The solitude which the soul craved that it might see God, or the simplicity of a worship that compelled the man to feel as if he stood in God's immediate presence, touched and shaped by His very hands, or the spontaneous speech that implored God to enter and possess and command the spirit—all came to seem to his maturer, manlier, and devouter mind pervaded with the consciousness of a humbler yet auguster dignity more becoming man's affinity and fellowship with God.

And it is well, in days when men so feel the potency of sense, that we now and then feel the greater potency of the spirit. We know the appeal made to the imagination by

the spacious majesty of a great cathedral; but to the inward eye there is something grander than either its stateliness or the sublimest worship ever celebrated under its roof, in the coming of the desolate and needy yet yearning soul to the God that seeks him, sure that he can be happy only as he is found of God. Paul knew something of both kinds of grandeur. The temple of Jerusalem, stately, magnificent, full of the traditions of his race and the memories of his fathers, made an appeal of one kind; the souls of Gentile and Hebrew men made an appeal of quite another order. He forsook the first that he might respond to the second. And it was in response to this appeal that he had come to Corinth to preach, in the face of cynical Greek and bigoted Jew, the grace that saved by the cross.

I.

Let us endeavour to conceive the conditions under which he tried to do this work at Corinth. They will help us the better to understand what he meant by preaching Christ crucified.

He was not new to the work and the troubles of the missionary when he arrived in Corinth. Behind him were years of labour and sorrow. The man of Macedonia who appeared in a vision had cried, "Come over and help us;" and to Paul to hear was to obey. He landed at Philippi, bringing westward and into Europe the gospel of Christ; but love did not leap to answer his love, or faith rise to salute his coming; instead, he was beaten, smitten with stripes, set in the stocks, made fast in the inner prison. But the virtue of his Roman citizenship opened the door of his prison, and he passed on to Thessalonica.

There "lewd fellows of the baser sort" set the city in an uproar, and he was forced to depart for Berea. There he found men nobler than those of Thessalonica; for they searched the Scriptures to discover whether his words were true. But enmity followed and drove him to Athens, where he felt the wondrous charm of the city and the wondrous indifference of the men. Images of gods were everywhere, but nowhere the living God or godly peace of soul. The men wanted news, not of the kind he preached, but of the sort that was curious rather than true. Yet to them the message was strange, and the messenger stranger. They looked at him with the indulgent because amused and pitiful scorn of conscious culture—if, indeed, we can speak of a conscious culture, for a culture which has become conscious has ceased to be refined—and asked each other, "What doth the gossip say?" But as what he said was, at any rate, something new, they condescended to hear him. So they set him on Mars' Hill, and as he unrolled his burden—told of their blind quest after God, and God's ceaseless quest after them—they listened till he came to speak of resurrection and judgment. And then offended rather than amused, they broke in and said, "Enough; we shall hear thee again on this matter."

And so he had to forsake cultured Athens, leaving behind, as the fruits of his labour and sufferings, Dionysius the Areopagite, the woman Damaris, and a few nameless souls, and make for busy Corinth. Here, amid experiences to which he had grown accustomed, but also with an unwonted tolerance, he lived to gather a Church, building it on the foundation which God Himself had laid. What the city was we know; it was rich, luxurious, commercial, lascivious. East and West met in it, and mingled their

vices and their faiths. Thither had come the Jew, and built his synagogue, opened his bazaar, made a place for himself on the exchange, and used his knowledge of the Eastern men and markets to bring their wares and their ways to the men of the West. There, too, he found the Greek, subtle, full of the pride of race and intellect and achievement, speculative, argumentative in his very commerce, and beating out in the manner of the schools the questions connected with the principles and profits of trade. There, too, was the Roman, with the spirit of the soldier who had become sovereign, scornful of the poor civilian and the mean merchant, thinking the world had been made to be conquered, and he to be its conqueror. And in the face of this mixed and divided community Paul preached; and the Jew, as he listened scornfully, hated the man who had broken with his ancestral faith, and despised the crucified Christ he would substitute for Moses; while the Greek smiled in his large disdain, and the Roman tolerated in his proud indifference. Still amid this society he lived, for he was free to preach his gospel. And you can imagine him, after a day's hard toil at his handicraft, in the evening stealing along the quay, watched by few, cared for by fewer, a mean-looking little Hebrew, who still could not be conquered, and had in him vaster ambitions for the good of men than could find room in the mind of imperial Cæsar. And if you had followed him you might have seen him climb by a mean stair to a meaner upper room, where the slave set free for an hour by his master, or the wharfinger escaping from loading or unloading his ship, or the porter seeking release from the burden he had carried throughout the day, met to hear the mean preacher, great, in spite of his meanness, in dignity and in power.

But what of the preacher himself? Can we look into his mind and look out through his eyes at the city he lived in, the men who hated or who mocked him, at the men who now quietly heard and now, indifferent, passed by? The historic imagination is a great thing for the student. It can enable him in a prosaic age to live in an heroic past; to call up in the mysterious chamber of his imagination times that were and are not, and bid chivalrous men and gay women, long fallen into dust, live before his eye and breathe the breath of generous life. And what he has seen he can make to live on the printed page; and the idle and the curious can read what he has created, and feel as if they were transported from their mean moment to a nobler time. But the historic and creative and interpretative imagination in the preacher is a harder and a more painful gift; it shows him much that he would be happier if he did not see. Thus, had Peter gone to Corinth, he would have preached and not known, or so understood as not to have cared, how people thought and what they felt; but the clear, creative imagination of Paul could penetrate into the brain of the Roman and look through his eyes; into the intellect of the Greek and judge with his cynicism; into the spirit of the Hebrew and feel with his heart, or dream with his fancy. And as he looked at the men he could read their thoughts without the help of words, translating the scowl on the Hebrew's face into bitter speech, the scorn on the Greek's lip into eloquent reproach. But though he knew the thoughts of the men he did not dare be silent in their presence. For God sent him to preach the gospel, and he preached it possessed with the passion for souls that is the image in man of grace in God. And in his mean room, out of his mean

audience, he created a society of penitent and holy men whose worship was beautiful in God's sight, and whose being was the fruitful seed of the Church Catholic.

II.

But it was not given to the apostle any more than to his Master to do his work without suffering, and though his word, by the demonstration of the Spirit and its power, had prevailed, yet here, as he writes, the antagonisms and the victories of those early days in Corinth come back to him. His mingled feelings are represented by three series of antitheses. First, there are three typical persons—the Jew, the Greek, and the Christian. Secondly, these three typical persons have three characteristic quests:—the Jew requires a sign; the Greek seeks after wisdom; the Christian aims at preaching Christ. Thirdly, there are three typical attitudes of the three typical persons to the one supreme Subject:—Christ is to the Jew a stumbling-block, to the Greek foolishness, to the Christian the power and the wisdom of God. What the Jew demanded was a vision of power; what the Greek sought was a source of wisdom; what the Christian found was power and wisdom combined in the very Person the two others despised.

These three persons, with their characteristic quests and attitudes, are old, yet new; they belong to the first century and to the nineteenth; they lived then, and they live to-day. Suppose, then, the preacher depicts the past, and the hearer reads in the past depicted the present that still lives. For the Jew is still seeking his sign, the Greek his wisdom, and the Christian is possessed of his Christ.

1. The demand of the Jew. He seeks a sign. He felt

he had a past which gave him, especially in things religious, rights over the present. And of these rights there was none clearer or more absolute than this, that he have from the preacher who would persuade him to change his faith a reason sufficient not only to justify but to compel the change. He had cause to be a convinced as well as a proud man; his ancestry was illustrious; and even in the face of great Rome or wise Greece he could feel that he was in the presence of people that were of yesterday and of earth, while he was of eternity and of God. His father was Abraham, called out of Chaldean Ur to found a people elect to the highest of all destinies—the friend of God, the most eminent of faithful men. His lawgiver was Moses—no man like Draco, giver of a code too severe for human weakness; or, like Solon, the giver of a law made by human wisdom, but a mediator of a law which came straight from God. God made it; it had descended out of heaven. Other nations had statesmen and poets, philosophers and heroes; he had prophets and saints. The literature possessed of Greece and cultivated of Rome was of the earth; his literature was a book God made. He owned what no other people had anything to equal or be named beside—the very Book of God. Nay, this God Himself was so much his peculiar possession that it made the Jew singular and pre-eminent among the peoples; they worshipped idols, but he worshipped the one Creator of heaven and earth. And so he was proudest for this reason—he owned God rather than was owned of Him. He so owned God that he determined the very terms on which other men were to be known or accepted of God. He said, "You must be circumcised by me; you must become a member of my nation; you must belong to my synagogue and worship in

my temple, or you cannot have my God. I have His covenanted mercies; all outside me belongs to the sphere of the great uncovenanted. If men would have our God, they must become Jews; only as they have the benefit of our orders can they be the people of our God." In so speaking the Jew did more honour to Judaism than to Jehovah. It is impossible to bind God to a single institution and leave Him a universal God. There are two kinds of atheism—what we may by comparison call a nobler and more generous, and a baser and a meaner. The nobler says, "There is no God;" the meaner says, "There is a God, but man can have access to Him only through instruments which are in my hands, and can be used only by me and mine. We are the covenanted channel through which His grace reaches men; apart from us His mercies are irregular, uncovenanted, very extraordinary in their action, still more extraordinary in their results." But what is this save to make our littleness limit God's infinitude, and throw the dark shadow of our broken and sordid polities upon the radiance of His love?

And out of this attitude came the Jew's demand for a sign. He was a miraculous person; his people and all their institutions were supernatural. And so he claimed as the necessary condition of his conversion a greater miracle than himself, but from the very nature of the case no such miracle was possible. He said, "I am God's great work: a greater is not in the world, since I am the witness of the supernatural, and without me the supernatural were not." And to this demand what answer could the apostle make? How can you show a sign to a man whose fixed principle is that he is a miracle, the evidence and symbol of the supernatural, while what is not

of him is only our poor everyday naturalism? But might not Paul have replied somewhat thus?—"If thou hadst been able to see the Christ thou hadst seen a greater—the sovereign miracle of meekness and mercy and grace. Think of Him; child He is of thine own proud race, yet lowly in heart, giving rest unto the soul. Thou hast indeed cause for pride, yet cause also for humiliation. Out of thy loins He sprang; yet, beautiful as He was in character, deed, and word, for Him thou hadst only the cross. Greatest of all that ever came into this world, yet what hadst thou for Him but suffering and death? He 'broke His birth's invidious bar;' and, by breaking it, became no local, narrow Jew, but Son of man while Son of God. And through Him God became a new Being for man—not narrow, not local, but universal, seeking all, accessible to all. What was the name He found for this God? Father, Father of men, with the emotions of love, of infinite yearning; of a paternity that loves no living sorrow, but rather seeks to change it into living joy. That Father of all seeks all by means of Christ. He stands before us the manifested God, witness in His very Passion and death to this eternal truth, that man's sin is God's sorrow; that no evil can come to the child that is not greater evil to the infinite and eternal Father. And then, as its counterpart here, that earth may be responsive to heaven, lives and abides the Son. All over earth through all the ages, from the millions of men who have turned their faces heavenward, the cry has risen for the God who is also the Father. And now out of heaven the Father has stooped to seek the sons through the Son of His love, the Only Begotten who came to create a great family of God—to turn this confused, divided, troubled earth into one great and holy brother-

hood. And now, O Jew, look from thy proud claim, which separates man from man and man from God, to this Christ who shows us the eternal Father seeking immortal sons; and these sons through recognition of the Father so becoming brothers that the Greek forgets his culture to become a man, and the Jew forgets his religion to become his fellow, and the Roman forgets empire, the Hindoo caste and the white man colour, the negro slavery, and the circumcised his distinguishing rite, that all may become one in Christ. Dost thou claim and seek a miracle, O Jew? Then behold the miracle I bring! The revelation of the eternal God through His incarnate Son in order to the reconciliation to Himself of mortal men and to the creation of a whole family on earth through man's common sonship and God's common Fatherhood."

2. The quest of the Greek. He seeks after wisdom. He too had a past which gave him claims upon the present that neither he nor it could afford to ignore. He had had his illustrious ancestry, and could claim to be in history as great a miracle as the Hebrew. Where Providence reigns there is no great or little, there is no necessary or exceptional, for all is order; and where order is, the little is as necessary and as much in place as the great. What, then, was the place of the Greek in the preparation for Christ and in the progress of man? Let us recall some of the discoveries he had made, adding to the pomp yet to the fruitfulness and the dignity of human life.

First, he made this great discovery the necessity of freedom to man. A complete and noble manhood is possible only through freedom. Did you ever think what you owe to the people who first created a free city, a state of free men? Read the inscriptions of Assyrian

kings that tell you how they in their might vanquished armies, but do not tell you of the armies they lost and the armies they destroyed without pity or regret. Read the records of Egyptian monuments, and they will tell how a great king, to preserve his very dust, builds a mighty pyramid; but they do not tell you, for it is a thing not worthy of thought or mention, of the thousands of men that he threw away in the building of it, the unnamed who went down to an unremembered death to preserve the memory of the one man. But the Greek, in creating a free state, created the very idea of manhood; and as a consequence the sense of the worth of the actual and the dignity of the ideal man. And he made manhood a reality as well as an idea. Man free is man reasonable, living an ordered, a social, joyous, complete life. All that free cities and free states can ever accomplish for us was made possible by the Greek.

But, secondly, he gave us not only the ideal of freedom, but of art and its function in adorning and enriching life. He may be said to have discovered art and beauty for all time. Look at those colossal figures standing by the Nile, or that have been thence distributed throughout the world—they are majestic because they are immense, but they are cold, impassive; or look at the statues of the great Assyrian monarchs—massive, insensible to pity, sensible only of power; or at the Hindoo god—many-headed, many-armed, many-breasted, hideous symbol of a race more appreciative of fruitfulness than of beauty. And then turn to the Greek as he discovers the human form divine, making it so fit a symbol of Deity that man through it becomes more conscious of God. Every limb and feature is made so to speak of the divine, that the

very curls that cluster round the head of Zeus become a greater power than the thunderbolt; and men so felt the Godhead in the magnificence and passion of the perfect manhood, that the great artist when he looked upon the statue came away awed and reverent, saying, "Lo, I have beheld God!" Is it possible, think you, for any of us to tell the range and measure and quality of the good we owe to the race that discovered beauty for man?

But, thirdly, freedom and art were not the only gifts of the Greek; he created a literature that is classical. Look at poetry, the fit speech for deepest emotion; lyric where the passion of the moment, out of a heart oppressed with the unutterable, breaks into words that seem to float in music or to swim in tears; or epic, exhibiting the conflict of gods and men, of mighty forces, rational and irrational; or the drama, where will struggles with destiny, and in the very hour in which it is crushed triumphs over the destiny that crushes it. And along with poetry the Greek gave us science, philosophy, the passion for the true, the method of the search for the good, embodied in a literature that we know not whether to value most for its imagination or its reason. Does not his literature remain for us and for all modern peoples classical, the realized ideal of perfect thought perfectly expressed?

It was small wonder, then, that he to whom we owe freedom and art, no less than poetry and philosophy, when spoken to of Christ as the Son and the veritable Revelation of God, should turn away and say, "Where is His wisdom? He is a barbarian and uses a speech that is without grace, that can hardly with truth be called a language. You speak of Him, too, as crowned with thorns, pitiful in His very pity—an object that does not speak of manhood, but

speaks only of the weeping eye and of the marred visage. What kind of picture, with His sorrows and wounds and weakness, would this crucified Christ make? Could He for glory or godlikeness be compared with our Zeus? We love the gracious and the lovely; we will not love this sorrow and suffering, this apotheosis of passion and shame." And how might Paul answer these proud, strong words? Somewhat thus: "Hast thou, O Greek, thought of the meaning of this Christ? You love freedom, for you made it; and man, the free citizen, is man more than immortal; but look, you bind him still in passions that make him a very slave. And what but their tyrannical sins have made the once free sons of Greece slaves to imperial Rome? But this Christ can take the man bound in the bondage of sin, held by the slavery of lust, fettered and prisoned by evil habit and evil passion, and make him a free man indeed, for a man who knows the law of God, and loves to obey it; can make him a citizen not of any Greek city, but of an eternal kingdom—a being who in the very moment of his mortal existence moves in immortality, in the very hour of his apparent weakness has around him and within him the power of God. You made art, and your art is beautiful; but the beauty that is in Christ can find its symbol in no marble, be expressed by no colour, for it is the radiant goodness, the rare loveliness of soul, that makes Him alone, of all who have lived among men, 'the altogether lovely.' And He creates the rarer art of holy being, the rarer art of holy living. He creates a beauty so beautiful that the inmost soul alone can see it, and the soul that sees it is ravished for ever and rapt into an ecstasy of admiration and of love. You think your poetry is great; but He is the supreme Maker, who has

not written thoughts that can be set to music, but has built the celestial harmonies. He has made all time, He has made all the universe—nay, He has made the very silent eternity itself—live in poetry. Has He not shown the conflict of eternal love with temporal sin? Has He not shown this wayward world struggling away from God, but sought and saved by the God it struggles to flee from? Has He not filled every life that is lived with poetic meaning, vast as eternity, large as deity, by bringing deity into humanity, by lifting humanity into deity? And a deity not like your lustful and violent Zeus, but One holy, beneficent, gracious. Can the greatest feats of poetry, and the mightiest of its achievements, for one hour or one moment be measured alongside what lies in this Christ? And as to your wisdom, O Greek! it is a proud yet vain philosophy that you love. But in this Christ the great mystery of being is solved—for in Him the God who made the world, the end for which God made it, the means by which He is to reach His end, are all so revealed that the scattered and multitudinous creatures who have estranged themselves from Him may yet, through holy concord, and beautiful love, and perfect devotion, be brought into a saved society. Was your quest, O Greek, after perfect freedom, perfect beauty, perfect poetry, perfect philosophy; and did you turn from the Christ, thinking that none of these could be found in Him? Then return, and in Him you will find all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, and such graces and beauties as it has never entered into your heart to conceive."

3. The experience and work of the Christian. He preaches a Christ he has found to be the power and wisdom of God. Goethe said, "If thou wouldst know a poet, go and live in the poet's land;" meaning that, till you knew

the speech and the experience of the poet, you never could know his mind. So, if you would know Christ, make your appeal to Christian experience, go live in the soul of the Christian man and Church. There, and there alone, can you learn the truth that is reality. The thing the Jew wanted was a sign, power exercised; the thing the Greek wanted was wisdom, truth embodied in life and sense and thought; and these things Paul says are in Christ. He is both power and wisdom. Power is causal, creative; power made the world be, and keeps the world in being; wisdom is adaptative, constructive, brings order and design into the region where power works. Now, Christ brings to the making, to the re-making of men, power and wisdom—power that can take the lapsed, the lost, the basest, and so re-make him that he shall become the holiest; wisdom to take what He has re-made, and shape, develop, guide him, until his early promise becomes richest performance, and the conflict of the struggle into being passes into realized harmony and glorious beauty. This is no matter of theory, but of experience, personal and historical. We have seen it transacted under our own eye, we are sure it has happened in our own hearts, and we know it to have been achieved on the field of history through all the Christian ages. And we have the right to insist that it be considered as seriously as any fact of science, for science knows no fact more real or of so transcendent significance. Look at this poor dark earth, these disordered men, men with passions in them, warmed as it were by the devil, and fanned as it were by the infamy of hell; look at this earth, where war has prevailed, where darker things than war have held impassioned sway; look at evil, not confined to the lowest, but encouraged often even in the highest places; look at this evil, nurtured and

nourishing itself by feeding on all that is noblest, and wasting what it feeds on in man and man's being. Then see how Christ can take the man at his worst and the woman at her basest, and out of them make saints that can love God and that God has loved; make saints that can cause the very breath of the world to grow fragrant and the very heart of the world to grow tender. There is power in Christ, for He is able to save to the uttermost; there is wisdom in Christ, for Christ can sanctify what He has saved.

Now let me ask, as you stand face to face with the evil of men: in what other way can you cure it? You may call to your aid philosophy. Philosophy will make a select and cultured class, scornful of the multitude, and growing cynical through the sense of its own superiority. You may call in social theory, and argue that new conditions must be created that men may be made happy and perfect. You may invoke the aid of Parliament, and imagine, with that faith that is so pitiful and so pathetic, because it trusts what is so impotent, that Acts of Parliament can do all that men may need. You may invoke all these, and yet all these, apart or together, will fail to do that which Christ has achieved. He, making new persons, can create new conditions; He, making new men, can make a new world. Do not think that to say this is to despise any effort calculated to make conditions happier, to give wealth a wider and more equal distribution, or to remove one single wrong. No; whatever is wrong I would righten by Act of Parliament, or by any social agency whatever. But just and fit and right as all attempts at social and political amelioration are, still this is the supreme thing: You can make new conditions good only through good new men.

New conditions will not make old men young, with fresh glad life within them. This is the great achievement of Christ. He makes men, and through the men He makes He saves the world.

And what does this church mean? You have built it; it has risen at your will, to the greater glory of God, for the greater good of men; it stands a witness to His power and to His wisdom; and, in building it, it is His honour that you desire to promote. Make it worthy of Him. Let no shadow rest upon it, no burden hard to be borne, made up of things financial. Make it free—free for Him and His ends; and while you make it free, resolve that while outside these walls the hate, the division, the sin, the folly of men may live, within these walls the love, the truth, the fellowship, the brotherhood of man in God shall reign. Dedicate the place, and dedicate the minds that made the place, and dedicate all the work to be done within it to that Christ crucified who is for us, now and throughout all time, the power and the wisdom of God.

THE PRINCIPLES EVANGELICAL AND JUDICIAL.

THE PRINCIPLES EVANGELICAL AND JUDICIAL.

Preached in Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, Tuesday afternoon, October 8, 1889, *on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society.*

"The just shall live by faith."—ROM. i. 17.
"God will render to every man according to his deeds."—ROM. ii. 6.

OF these texts the first admits of an alternative rendering. It may with the Authorized and Revised Version run, "the just" or "the righteous shall live by faith," or it may run, "the just by faith shall live." If it be taken according to the first, then it means that faith is the regulative principle of a good man's life. It is not so much the standard he obeys as the shaping principle of his conduct. It animates and inspires him; it supplies him with springs and ends of action, places forces within him that make him as a new man, the creator and the builder of a new world. It exhibits him as so in relation to God that he is guided every moment by the God whose presence he realizes. While his energies are exercised in time, the home of his spirit, and all the laws that govern his being, are in eternity and are eternal.

According to the second rendering, "the just" or "righteous by faith" is a complex phrase or term used to denote a subject or man of whom a given thing is true—to wit, he "shall live." The man is "just;" this just state he attains "by faith," and this state carries with it as a necessary

consequence the condition men call life. Salvation, giving the amplest peace with God and all that flows from it, is the man's possession.

Now, the first rendering gives a meaning perfectly in harmony with the Epistle to the Hebrews, but not with the Epistle to the Romans. The second rendering gives a meaning entirely in harmony with the Epistle to the Romans, but not with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews xi. is a great prose poem on the life of faith, with its heroes, its heroisms, its imperishableness, its victories through defeat, the strength that has come out of sorrow, the way in which, by its martyrdoms and its deaths, it has blessed mankind, and made its history illustrious. But Romans is a great historical and dialectical argument intended to prove this thesis—how a man, guilty before God and therefore condemned, may become a man just before God and therefore saved. The argument throughout assumes the principle that it is possible to save only the just or justified man. In entering upon this discussion, the apostle quotes a verselet of the Old Testament as a sort of text—an authoritative statement of the position he holds and means to prove. That text speaks of the man as just or righteous by faith—and affirms that he and he only has life or is saved. The just by faith, and he alone, shall live. This is what we may call the principle evangelical.

The second text states what seems to be a precisely contrary principle, viz.—God shall give or distribute to every man according to his works. The awards of God are to be exactly proportioned to the man's deserts. He shall receive of blessing or bane, of good or evil, according to the measure of holiness or sin, obedience or disobedience, he has laid up. He is under a law of rigorous, and

impartial, and absolute justice. He shall have to appear before the judgment-seat of God, and there he shall receive according to his deeds. This is what we may call the principle moral and judicial.

I.

The problem of the texts, as thus taken together, may be said to be the place and relations of faith and works.

How is it that these two verses stand almost side by side in the same Epistle, coming from the same hand, and as parts of an argument directed to the maintenance of one position? What constitutes the difficulty is this—the position maintained in the Epistle, viz. justification by faith, seems to be the logical consequence of the text that affirms the evangelical principle, "the just by faith shall live;" but the logical opposite of the text that affirms the principle judicial, men must receive according to their works. And each text has been construed as exclusive and contradictory of the other by two opposed parties. Certain men have affirmed that the principle evangelical, and it alone, is the sum-total and complete and exhaustive essence of Christianity. And certain other men have maintained that the principle moral and judicial is the exclusive sum-total and essence of the Christian religion. And they have agreed in declaring that both cannot be true; of the two one must be false. The first class have often been filled with a wonderful spiritual vanity or disdainful pride, thinking that unless good men thought as they did the men could not be good and that it was more necessary to be rigorous in behalf of the truth than to be charitable to men; and so they have taken the phrase of Paul, "By grace ye are saved through faith," and have emphasized it with

praiseworthy energy, or when quoting "Being justified by faith," they have like Luther inserted "alone"—"by faith alone," but have forgotten to add with Luther, "but by faith that doth not abide alone." And, in their zeal for the principle evangelical, they have neglected or ignored the principle judicial and ethical. On the other hand, the second class have affirmed this latter position in its unqualified sense. Christianity is a new system of ethics, and its great code is contained in the Sermon on the Mount. On this ground they have, like a late distinguished critic, preached with an iteration more monotonous than emphatic, that the Christian is a sweetly reasonable religion, though they have more often exercised the reason than embodied the sweetness. They have been great in the praise of the excellence of virtue, and the nobleness of honour, and the beauty of holiness, though they have rather praised the beauty than exemplified the holiness. And thus they stand opposed to the evangelicals, finding the Christian gospel only a republication of the moral law of nature, and a very excellent and very admirable code of cultured or cultivable ethics.

Now, these two opposed classes are equally unjust to the sources whence they take their notion of the religion. If they had only penetrated into the meaning of Paul they might have found that neither was right, but that both, by missing his meaning, had perverted his truth. For the man who is strongest in affirming salvation by grace through faith, is also strongest in affirming the absolute obligation of every man to be what God meant him to be, and eminently of the Christian man to be a god-like man, bound so to live that when rewarded according to his works he shall receive honour and glory and immortality

from the hand of God. They might have discovered that their one-sided exaggerations were due to their own imperfect reading of the truth, and not to the facts or the truths they professed to read. The simplicity of the truth has often confounded the Church as well as the world, and men have failed to find in Paul and his doctrine the cure of the confusions by which their exaggerations have lived. Grace and works, law and faith, are not opposites or contraries translated into living or permanent speech, but they are complementary, harmonious, parts of a great whole, so bound together by God that the man who puts them asunder commits an act unholy. They only become contradictories when each is as it were set to do the work of the other—works made to do what only grace can accomplish, grace forced to perform what is possible to works alone. This was the error of the men Paul opposed, but he did not so oppose it as to deny either to grace or works its proper place and function. Grace does not cancel or supersede merit, rather creates and produces it. The gospel does not repeal law, rather enhances and endorses it. Faith does not dispense with works, but condescends to accept and glorify them. Faith is the firstborn, but works may have the blessing. But only the man who penetrates into the Pauline system, and stands uncovered and reverent within the temple of the Pauline thought, can see how it is alike true that the just by faith, and he alone, shall live, and that yet God will reward every man according to his works.

II.

Now, the discussion of this matter may help us to a right comprehension of the Church's duty in relation to the

question which especially interests this assembly. And in order to understand the relation between these two, faith and works, or grace and merit, we must attempt to discover what they respectively mean.

Let us start, then, from this — a clear distinction between the man justified and the man made meet or fit for glory; or, to express it otherwise, a distinction between salvation and reward. Salvation is freedom from penalty; so conceived it is not reward, but only the possibility of attaining and enjoying it. In a perfectly true sense it is negative rather than positive; it is penalty escaped, it is not attainment won. Between the man acquitted and the man enfranchised there is an immense difference. Between a state of simple freedom from penalty and a state of final beatitude there is a distance almost infinite. Salvation has regard to sin forgiven, penalty remitted, to the guilty proclaimed just and justified. But reward or glory or final beatitude has regard to meetness or fitness, the quality or the character of the person forgiven. The supreme good is goodness. In a moral universe it is not possible to any power to make a bad man happy, but what is possible is to make the concord between character and condition perfect. And then, where the concord is of a perfect man with a perfect state, there is beatitude. But in the degree that he falls short of perfection he fails of final bliss, which means that it is only as he is good that he can be made happy; or simply, in order to beatitude, the perfection of the man must be equal to the perfection of his conditions. And so through character alone can God create happiness.

But the grounds and sources of these two things are as different as the things themselves. Salvation is altogether of

grace, but reward of merit. A man is justified through faith, but he is rewarded according to his works. Into the one no merit can enter; in the other there must be merit to permit award. By salvation a man escapes from a law that punishes, only to come under the authority of a law that fixes award and reward. Paul, in the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, expresses, though in another connection, the same principle. "There is only one Foundation—Christ." No man can lay any other. If he is ever to build, it must be on this. But Christ is Foundation, not superstructure. The superstructure man creates; so when he has passed on to the Foundation, which is Christ, he forthwith begins to build. He may not mean to do it, but to do it he is compelled. There is no man so busy in building as the idlest man. He who does least work is he who works most, for his very neglect of action is active formation of character. Idleness is the most wasteful and wearisome form of activity that man can indulge in or endure. But if that be so, then the man who attempts to stand on this foundation and yet not to build, builds all the more. What he has in his choice is not whether he shall build or shall not build, but what material he may use. It may be gold, silver, or precious stones, or it may be wood, hay, stubble. He may choose to build with the one class of materials or with the other, but he cannot choose not to build. And what he builds is tried by fire. When the fire rises round the incombustible, the gold, silver, and precious stones are heated, they become molten, perhaps, but they remain unconsumed. Nay, the fire only purifies, does not destroy, and the purified building stands till the Master comes, crowns the builder with the garland of victory, and makes him enter amid greeting and acclaim into the joy of his Lord. But the man who

has used the combustible material, the wood, hay, stubble, finds that as the flames begin to rise and to play round his structure, it catches fire, burns, crackles, is utterly consumed. Then the poor desolate builder, alone on his bare burnt hearth, finds all his work has perished, all his building gone. And he himself a saved man, who has yet suffered loss, though the loss of the shameful thing he tried to build is for him the only good form of gain. All he meant, or ought to have meant, to abide has perished, as it deserved to perish, but he himself is saved "so as by fire."

III.

The principles, then, are not exclusive, but complementary; their spheres and their functions differ, but do not conflict. This will become the more evident if we consider them in relation first to Christian life, secondly to Christian thought.

1. Christian life. They teach us the rudimentary truth that the man grace has saved, and saved from the law of works and ceremonies, has been saved only to be brought under an absolute spiritual law. We must not take an argument directed against Mosaic legislation and turn it into an argument against fixed, eternal, rigorous law. There is, in a sense, a law that binds the very will and throne of God; there is a sense in which even in the supreme act of His grace God followed law—the law of His own eternal sovereign paternity. And He brings, by the act of the grace that saves, the man out of the law of works, and out of the law ceremonial and external, into the law spiritual and eternal. And this man, so emancipated, finds this a more absolute law for the govern-

ment of his conduct and apportionment of reward. And, observe, this was a cardinal truth in the older reformed theology. I would it were possible to bring back the ethical sense of the fathers to the conscience of the sons. I would it were possible to get the sons to think, as the fathers thought, of the absolute, holy Will expressed in Scripture, in nature, in grace, in conscience—expressed that it may be obeyed, and that, unless obeyed, will inflict loss even on the saved man. And if we could think, as our fathers thought then, our first grand idea would be not escape from misery, but escape into holiness—escape into the conditions and into the obligations of a grander and diviner service. Do not delude your souls by using unreal words. Men who have been in Christ these thirty—nay, these fifty or sixty—years still speak of themselves as "sinners," and "miserable sinners," and "unworthy worms," plunged in all manner of evil and of loss. Yet were you to translate the word "sinner" into concrete acts of sin, how many calling themselves sinners would plead guilty to the sins? Do not use vain, empty, conventional generalities, and say to your own souls, "We are humble and lowly before God, for we are miserable sinners." Indeed you are when you so speak, but what right have you to be what you so describe? Take an Epistle of Paul, written to men fresh out of heathenism, without the inheritance of nineteen Christian centuries in blood and spirit and thought, and then look how Paul addresses these men. Does he say, "Unto the miserable sinners who dwell in Corinth," or, "Unto the men who profess to be in Christ, but confess to be deep in sin, in Ephesus and Thessalonica"? Nay, but he says, "Unto the saints, and unto the brethren in Christ Jesus." Where is our idea of saintship? We

have handed it over to the Church of Rome, and we have let it weave the nimbus round the head of some dead mystic, or hermit, or fair penitent, and have forgotten that the only saintship must be a living saintship—radiant, real, realized by a conduct that seeks in all things to articulate and to express the eternal will of God and the living presence of the living Christ. Let us come back to the old idea of the saint, who lived that he might conquer his sin, and through the idea let us return to the reality, and be saints in Christ Jesus.

2. The principles in their mutual and corrective relations are no less significant for Christian thought. In their light we may see how to transcend an antithesis which has much perplexed Churches and still perplexes men to-day. This is the antithesis so sharply represented in the apostolic Church by Paul and James. Paul says, "We know that a man is justified by faith;" James says, "We know that a man is justified by works;" and in proof both cite, and cite in all good faith, the great example of Abraham. Now, on what principle do we so explain as to reconcile the justification by faith of Paul and the justification by works of James? Paul speaks to men who had come face to face with the alternative, Moses or Christ, and tells those who wish by an eclectic process to escape the alternative that it is impossible. Where Christ is Supreme, He must be alone; a divided were to Him a lost authority; therefore the works of Moses must be surrendered by all who have received the grace of Christ. "Ye are saved, and ye can be saved by faith only, without the works of the law." But James faces men who profess to have received the teaching of Paul, and who have found in it an apology for their own sins and shortcomings, and have said, "Go to, let us go on

in sin that grace may abound." And so he turns to them and says, "Nay, justify your justification by your works; show that you are men justified by acting as just men." The different state of the men makes a different message necessary. To sinful men seeking salvation the only possible gospel is, "By grace ye are saved;" but to saved men needing a law of conduct, the only possible word is, "As ye have believed, so obey; let your works justify your justification of God."

Let us, in order to illustrate the distinction yet relation of the two positions, take Luther. Imagine him living in Wittenberg, preaching in his fervid way the gospel of Paul. But there has come round the country side, and been heard at all the fairs and great gatherings, a famous Boanerges, Friar Tetzel, whose gospel is the excellence of the indulgences which men may purchase through him of the Holy Father. And Luther, when he heard, up rose and said, "This Friar Tetzel speaketh no truth, speaketh rather what is of the father of lies; man's sin concerns God, and only God can wipe away the sin of man. Man's offence is against God's law, and only God can set free from the law man has offended. Therefore the justifying is God's act and the act of God's grace, and he who speaketh other than this speaketh what is the worst that can be spoken against the truth of God." And the word of the monk of Wittenberg was true, and so victorious.

But now change the scene. Dr. Martin Luther has, on his way back from Worms to Wittenberg, been seized and carried off to the Wartburg, where he has another sort of struggle. He has to fight the devil within and the devil without, and he finds the one within greater and stronger than the one without. He seeks in his captivity to serve

the people he cannot minister unto, by creating for literature a German language and for German faith and hearts a German Bible. When doubt troubles him, he seeks comfort from the Nature which shows him the midnight heaven, whose floor is the roof of earth, "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold," expanded yet without pillared support; or from the song of the bird that sings upon the bush, with no friend but God, yet having Him can have no enemy. As he does his work and thinks of these things, strange tidings are brought from Wittenberg. Men led by Carlstadt have begun to say, "All is of grace and all is of faith. To us sin has ceased to be; it has, as a thing of the flesh, perished, and we can live as people who do not know sin, and to whom all is holiness." When he hears this we may imagine Luther writing an epistle and saying, "Know ye this: if God justified you, was it for any end but to make you godly? If Christ died to save you, was it for any end but to make you Christ-like? It may be perfectly true that man is not justified by the works of the law, but it is also true that a justified man will do the works, not of the law Mosaic, which is altogether outer and formal, but of God, which is eternal and internal and absolute. It may be true that men who are deepest in sin can be most perfectly saved, but the saving is out of their sin and not into another form of it. So remember, ye masters of Wittenberg, that the gospel has been preached freely and out of heaven to you in order that obediently on earth you may live unto heaven." "I once," he might add, "said the Epistle of James was an epistle of straw. I take that back and apologize to James. If he wrote to men such as you are, the words he used were most necessary words. For men who profess to live by faith, to live otherwise than as under God and unto God,

and altogether obedient to Him, is impossible and unveracious. Therefore, when ye passed out of death it was into life you passed, and a life that must be lived in obedience to the Son of God who gave Himself for you."

We must, then, once more affirm the old truth that the evangelical promise but begins the reign of the evangelical law. And this law not only binds, it also judges. The man who has lived under the gospel will be measured by the gospel, and not by the law of nature or of Moses. And it is he, the real concrete man, whom the law will measure. And what does this mean but that he will be judged according to his own works, though by the standard of the law of love? When men appear before Christ, what is to be His question? "To whom did ye do it? Did ye do it to the humblest of My servants as unto Me?" He demands conduct, and the Christian gospel demands conduct as the condition of all ultimate beatitude and reward. And no other principle would be equitable, could be just or generous. The rewards of God are states; they are not decorations. The degrees of blessedness are degrees of character. They are not ornaments that can be worn without, but harmonies that must be realized within. Were they ornaments, what would heaven be but a place of weariness and pain? Imagine a man who had lived unworthily coming into the presence of the Judge. He knows the unworthy life he has lived; he has not done as he ought; his thoughts have been mean, his actions have been ungenerous, his words have been cruel where they ought to have been kind; he has neglected the great brotherhood when he ought to have served its meanest member. Well, he comes into the Presence, and the Judge says to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord:" what then

would the man feel and what could the man say? "'Well done' to me, who never did well! 'Good' to me, who am remarkable only for neglect of goodness! 'Faithful' to me, who have been most faithless! 'Servant' to one who only tried to be of service to himself! I did not think such bitter irony could live within the Saviour's soul, or distil from the Saviour's lips. These undeserved rewards are disguised penalties; this unmerited praise is experienced pain." And would not the man's thought be the right thought? Is it possible that Christ could speak to a man in the great hour of judgment words that mean other than the man is, or make an award other than the man deserves? In this supreme moment the principle judicial must stand alongside the principle evangelical. The man who has been building and has only built wood, hay, stubble, how comes he but as the fugitive who rushes scared and scorched from the blackened and smoking plain, crying, "I only am left, and the Nemesis of undone deeds run a dark and fateful troop after me, seeking my life"? But the man who has lived, and loved, and served, and obeyed comes, with no boast of his works, borne onward without effort of his own, attended by a chorus of all the Christian graces, which surround him with woven garland and triumphant arch, and bear him, surprised, modest, glad, into the presence and into the joy of his Lord.

IV.

Let us next consider the practical significance of the two principles.

One of the questions these distinctions and discussions ought to help us to solve is the old puzzle about hope of reward and fear of punishment. In the realm where grace

reigns through faith unto righteousness, no man acts from hope of reward; he acts only in obedience to the Divine life active within him. His conduct is spontaneous; it is, as it were, life bursting out into appropriate act. And this life is at once generated and governed by love, and a love akin in quality and aim to the grace which begot it. It is love which has a passion for giving, for ministry, for service. Think you that is love which is always seeking to get? Think you the woman who is always saying, "My husband does not love me," is herself loving her husband? What does her constant complaint mean but that she has a heart so poor and empty that it can only receive, not give? Think you the man who is ever calculating as to the comfort his wife creates for him ever creates comfort for his wife? There is life and there is the mere semblance of life. Life, real, free, irrepressible, bursts into action, has its very being in bestowment from its own fulness; but the calculation which will not act till it has weighed motive and gain, is but the mechanics of being, gives out energy only in proportion to what it has taken in, but spontaneously produces no great and no magnanimous deed.

And as we find here adequate spring and motive for action, so here we can also find the sufficient end. End and motive are indeed one; love compels to action, and the end is more love in men for man and God. And this end we can regard without calculating every penny spent on the way as a means of getting to it. There is a world-wide distinction between envy and emulation. Envy grudges every good it sees another possess, and strives to deprive the possessor of it; emulation admires every good it sees, and most of all the person that possesses it. Envy, grudging, seeking to deprive, never gains possession of the good it

desires; emulation, never seeking to take from another, gains all the more. Envy, as it seeks to dispossess another, would consign him to lowest depths; emulation strains every nerve, bends every muscle to gain the goal, and all the same, if another reaches the goal first, is the first to join in the cry, "Well done, brave and strenuous!" Envy is the very passion of devils making hell more hellish; emulation is the very spirit and motive of angels making heaven more heavenly—for while all seek to excel, yet every one rejoices in the excellences of each and all. Wherever, then, emulation is, there is the spirit celestial: and the emulation that becomes the Christian is not the emulation for wealth or for comfort or for ease; it is emulation after the gracious and the good, that seeks as its highest reward opportunities for service, obedience, acts of kindness, and labours of love.

But some of you will say to me, "Why bid us emulate? What shall we emulously seek? If we had been born in the old martyr days, if we had fallen on times of persecution when the testimony had to be sealed with the blood, if ours had not been the days of mercantile, commercial, prosaic money-getting, but of the old chivalry and romance, how gladly would we have responded to the appeal to be heroic and chivalrous!" Ah! but the man who would be a hero in other days than his own has not even the making of a hero in him. The man who belongs to a past in thought, where he could have been good, and is not good in the living and articulate present, which is his own, is a dreamer of vain dreams, which are yet there only to his rebuke and to his shame. How many all round us crave for help—the help most needed by men! On many a sofa in many a drawing-room a mother and a mistress will lie reading the last new novel, seasoned with the scandal of some scandalous and

infamous life, utterly unconscious of the romance that is being lived or unfolded in the nursery, and blind to the tragedy down in the kitchen, where the maid battles with temptation, and toils amid weakness and unlightened pain. And many a man will be quick to feel the claim of the heathen afar, or the cry of distress at a distance, and be deaf to the clamant misery at his own door, the poverty and need that surround his own too comfortable home. Say not "the days that needed heroes are in the past;" the days most in want of heroes are in the present. We need heroic merchants, whose word, good as their bond, will make English commerce everywhere honoured and trusted. We need heroic workmen, who will bring highest ideals to lowliest action, and lighten up the pain and worry and the toil of their workshop with

> "The light that never was on sea or shore,
> The inspiration and the poet's dream."

We need, we ought to have, heroes that are prepared to toil within our great cities, down in our slums, amid the fallen and amid the outcast brothers and sisters whom only living Churches and living Christian men can reclaim and can redeem. Unless we are equal to all the demands of home, we shall never be equal to all the demands from abroad and afar.

But the principles have to be applied to this present case, and you will observe that exactly what is true of the individual is true of the society or the Church. Every Church comes into life by the grace of God. Every Church must be justified in the long run by its works or be judged according to its deeds. There are two principles by which men judge Churches. There is the principle ecclesiastical. The ecclesiastical principle says, "I and

my people constitute the sacred inheritance of God. He who would be of God must be of us, and every one that is not of our unity and of our order has broken the unity and is without orders." But this principle measures God by the institution of man. He is distributed as if they were in possession of Him, and they regard every departure from themselves as a departure from God. Then there is the principle evangelical, religious, that sees in each Church a creation of God's grace; that sees in all the Churches, as it were, the myriad hands of God spread through the mass of mankind, to make and shape that mass in His image, fashioning its units into the unity of a people that serve God and are saved through grace. The evangelical principle finds God active everywhere. Wherever God is active there Churches emerge, not by the faction of man, not by the hate of man, not by the schismatic divisions of man, but by the omnipresent, ever-acting grace of God. Since, then, every Church is under the great evangelical law, it is called into being by grace, but it is so called only that it may pass under the law moral and judicial. And as it lives under this law it must be judged according to its works. From this law no exception can be granted to any. No Church can live on its past; it must live by faith and duty in the present; no Church has any claim to be whose only right is historical. The only claim is present truth and life, love and service, making the Church a temple of the living God, a body for the living Spirit of Christ. Churches, then, everywhere live under the judicial and by the evangelical law. This makes it necessary that no Church or body of Churches lose for one moment their evangelical zeal. The Churches are bound to be vehicles of the grace of God, living centres of evangelical energy and force, changing

ever the secret life that is in them into the lives that are to be, penetrating the present, preparing the future, being in all their parts as bodies of the living God.

And how does all this bear on missions and missionary enterprise? It means that wherever on earth man knows not God, there you, in the person of some representative, are bound to be. It does not mean that you subtract yourself from home; no, it means you augment yourself at home. It does not mean that you circumscribe the limits of your energy. Nay, it means that here in the midst of a great city, or in the rural districts, or wherever men are—and men are everywhere, and wherever they are they are in need—there you are bound to be, to help and to save. And as you do your duty at home you will do your duty abroad. You cannot divorce missionary enterprise from home missions. The enthusiasm of the Church will run into foreign effort only as the activity of the Church runs into all forms of evangelical service and life at home. You cannot convert the heathen if you lose England; you can only save and convert the heathen if you hold, and command in ever greater degree England and the English people. Do not have the narrow spirit that says, "We are the select Churches." Nay, if once you think yourselves select you are in danger of the judgment. You are Churches of Christ for England and for man. And if you are to serve afar, you must serve not simply by funds, but by men; and men are harder to get, but nobler when gotten, than funds. And men—what kind of men do we need for home, for foreign missions? Why, we need our noblest and our best. Who would not love young men, with all the promise that is in them, the energy and the uncalculating hopefulness, the enthusiasm devoid of

worldly but possessed of Divine wisdom, who can go in the forlorn hopes of the world and change them into the arenas of victory? Make your Churches, then, nurseries of men. I speak to old men as to young. And to the old I say, Reverence the young; do not say, "Give us old heads on young shoulders," but be thankful that the heads are young as well as the shoulders that bear them. If men had old heads on young shoulders, what painful prigs would be the men! And to the young men I say, Respect and love and reverence the old. Age was once youth, and youth will yet be age; between you let love dwell, and with love perfect confidence. And to both I say, Love the truth as our fathers loved it. Help the men that love the truth to carry it to men they love, that the men may be saved. And you young men, rise to the great function that is before you. Do not let the lust of money, the love of place, the fascination of power, be able to draw you from the noblest service. And to fathers and mothers I say, Give us of your best, as it were of your own flesh and blood and spirit, to go out as the very missionaries and ministers of God. And, then, sending forth to this service our blood, our spirit, our sons surcharged with love for the souls of men, shall we not be able as Churches to justify our being, and show that though we are to be judged by our works, we have been made and saved, and are governed through and through, by the Divine grace that pities men and saves the men it pities by the Churches of apostolic faith and spirit and order? Amen.

PART II.

CONGREGATIONAL SERMONS.

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

I.

THE PSALM AND THE PSALMIST.

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

I.

THE PSALM AND THE PSALMIST.

"A Psalm of David."—*Superscription.*

In these days many men stumble at the Old Testament. Its very strength is an offence. The severity of its laws, the rigour of its religion, is a trouble and a perplexity. Once our fathers understood and loved its stern and exalted righteousness. It was, as it were, iron in their blood—an authority that held command over their spirit, a standard that defined the law they were to obey, and ruled their will. Theirs was a turbulent world, not to be governed by soft sentiment, but needing soundest moral sense. They pitied weakness and tried to change it into strength, but pity was not allowed a place that was not its own. It was compelled to serve moral ends in a moral way. Men had to do right and to obey righteousness in order that they might end the reign of lawless might, and bring in sweeter manners, purer laws. And so they came to the Old Testament with the sympathy that gives understanding. Its God was one of mercy but also of justice, to whom man had to give completest obedience. A more terrible thing

than sin man could not know, or a higher and more arduous thing than holiness he could not seek. And so here he learned to know and fear sin, to love holiness and to aspire after the holiness he loved.

We have fallen on softer days. We are easily moved to pity, but a pity that is often more a luxury to the man that feels it than a help to the man for whom it is felt. We fear suffering, dislike to see it, or to think of it, but we suffer it to be all the same. Our pity is keen enough to feel, but not strong enough to heal and to help. And our mood is reflected in our spiritual affinities and preferences. We feel in the New Testament a sweetness, as men love to phrase it, and a light that is attractive and is gracious. There we seem to have a congenial atmosphere, which we can restfully breathe, and feel life more worth living. The sterner Old Testament is alien, and we cannot so well appreciate what it teaches and what it means. We forget that while the New is tender, it is the tenderness of moral majesty, not of emotional pity. If it is sweet, it is the sweetness of a spirit reconciled to law, and penetrated by the law to which it is reconciled; not the sentiment that loves to weep, but does not care to act and to bear. We forget that the New Testament is built on the Old, and apart from the Old could not be. The God that is Father in the New is Sovereign in the Old, and the new Fatherhood cannot be divorced from the old Sovereignty. The grace that came by Christ implied the law that came by Moses; and if Christ redeemed from the law of Moses, it was that He might reconcile to the law of God. And so if we are to understand the New, it can only be by coming to it through the Old. It is as we find the Old in the New that we discover the New in the Old, and

realize that all the mercy and the grace that appeared in Jesus Christ implied and required all the holiness and all the righteousness that came by Moses and the prophets.

I. The Psalter and the Psalm.

But when men feel estranged in spirit from the sterner and stronger elements of the Old Testament, they would do well to remember the riches of grace and truth it contains. In many ways the one cannot be compared with the other. There is no history in the Old Testament that can be placed beside the histories of the New. All the saints of the olden time, however bright they may be, are like the sun, "dashed with wandering isles of night." There is passion in them, and evil, strong tendencies to man's strongest sins. Only in the ideal picture of One who is the Servant of God and the Sufferer for man do we find the beautiful and the perfect character we love. But in the Gospels there stands in His imperishable loveliness, in His beautiful and perfect holiness, He who alone of men could, unanswered, give the challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" and He remains for evermore the holy, the harmless, the undefiled, the separate from sinners. Nor have we in the Old Testament any that can compare with Paul, the man so eagle of eye as to read the inmost meaning of the law; so strenuous of thought as to carry us back into the very purpose of God, and seek through it to explain man and time; so inflexible of will, yet gracious of heart, as to live for the reconciliation of the world to God. Nor have we any writer in the Old Testament that can with John bear us from our turbulent time back into the heart of the Father, making us feel the love of the

Eternal, and see the world, as it were, with the eyes of God, and God with eyes full of His own light.

While these features of distinction and pre-eminence compel us to feel the supremacy of the New Testament over the Old, there is one element in which the Old transcends the New. Think, were it not for the Old, we should be without those spiritual songs which supply us with the fittest speech in which to address the eternal God. Here we need higher speech than we ourselves can frame. Man, if he is to know the awed and reverent hour of worship, must have nobler words than his poor thought can make, expressions of higher emotions than his tame spirit can feel. There is wondrous power in song to consecrate and ennoble. "Let me make the songs of a people, and I care not who makes their laws," said Fletcher of Saltoun, and he said well. To make the songs is to shape those emotions, fancies, ideals, ends, that are the highest because the most nobly embodied law enhearted in the heart. The man that can give to the spirit of a people its highest tone, its deepest conviction, its loftiest expression, will determine its truest purpose and noblest endeavours. There are men who visit the land I best know and most love, and they admire its beauty—the silvery Tweed flowing between its storied banks, past its mouldering monasteries, and through fields where almost every footstep wakes echoes of feud and foray, love and death; they admire, too, its mountains clothed with the purple heather, and its streams where the mottled trout invite the angler to come and ply his gentle craft, and they think its stately lochs and rivers beautiful to the eye and to the imagination, as they sleep or dance in their radiant summer beauty. But for a man to know and feel the meaning of the land he

must know its songs, and how they consecrate its streams and make its lone glens and cairns significant of days that are past, and deeds of heroism that were not achieved in vain. Only as the living imagination quickened by the living heart transfigures nature, does the nature become significant. And if the poetry that idealizes be so necessary to the interpretation and revelation of a land, then ere man can feel the full meaning that even for himself alone lives in the name of God, he must see Him, as it were, steeped in poetry, penetrated and transfigured by song, translated into speech higher than the speech of common day, full of the mystic passion that seeks the Eternal, and loves to lose our temporal being in Him.

And this is the function which the Psalter fulfils. It is the book of song which gives to the dumb spirit speech fit for the presence of God. It is the poetry which idealizes God for the spirit. And what it does for our sense of God it also does for our feeling of man in relation to Him. These psalms come to us steeped in loved memories. The words that tell us of God as our Shepherd raise the tender image of the mother who first taught us so to think and speak of Him; and they make us feel in the direct succession of the holy spirits from whom we received our being and our faith. Think how wondrous has been the life of a psalm like this, and how impossible it were to write its history! Men who learned to use it in childhood have found it in age change the "shadow feared of man" into the translucent veil of a gracious immortality. By its words penitents have been lifted out of despondency and despair into joyous peace. Thousands of years have passed since it first rose from the heart of the man who made it. For centuries it was sung in old Judæa by Hebrew tongues.

Captives who sat by the rivers of Babel, and wept as they remembered Zion, dried their tears and became hopeful as they sang the Lord's song in the strange land, though their joy turned to sadness when their captors demanded that the voice of piety be changed into the sounds of mirth. Men in the Maccabean wars, who trusted their heroic leaders and so became heroes themselves, as they watched by the river of Zion that made glad the city of their God, came to feel that they could meet the might of the world by a greater might, and so took comfort in disaster and grew strong for victory as they sang of Jehovah who guided and gave rest. Shepherds abiding in the fields and keeping watch over their flocks by night, as they heard sweet and rhythmic speech of promise and good will fall from heaven, may well have broken into far-sounding and ascending song in praise of Him who fed Joseph like a flock, gathered the lambs with His arm, carried them in His bosom, and gently led those who were with young. Men who had seen the Good Shepherd lay down His life for the sheep, and who loved to meet in Roman catacombs, or crowded cities, or still and desert places, that they might remember Him, grew happy and cheerful and holy as they sang to "the Lord our Shepherd." And since then, who can tell the thousands who, while seeking in dark ages the clearer light, or in days of stress and trouble and persecution, such as our fathers knew, when faithful men were hunted on moors, and had to hide in wild glens and caves of the earth, or to endure the dungeon, have taken courage and grown peaceful by the help of this sweet song? And now we, met here apart from the crowd and turmoil of the city, men and women with the sin, and the passion, and the pity, and the need, and the doubt of to-day, may yet clasp hands with the innumerable

multitude behind us, and journey with them in thought and spirit, chanting to Him who binds past and present into one, the song, "The Lord is our Shepherd; we shall not want."

These psalms, then, have had a very high and holy function alike for our individual and collective life; and as the years advance we feel this function grow higher and holier. We need speech that shall make us feel the awfulness and the majesty of God. I am sick of the loathsome lusciousness of those modern hymns we use of God—the language of sensuous sentiment or amorous devotion. They teach us to sing of "dear Jesus," or the "sweet Saviour;" or the Church forlorn and distressed; or in praise of "Paradise, O Paradise," and they tell us that only to think of it is to "long for rest." These things emasculate faith and impoverish piety. What we need is to feel awed and obedient in the presence of the God who made us that we might serve Him, and who claims our service. We dare not long for rest while He asks of us work. We dare not think of the Church as forlorn which He has made militant. We dare not use the sweet terms of the callow lover of One whose very condescension is an act of majesty. It is the majesty of God rather than the æstheticism of man that ought to inspire our worship. These luscious hymns, with all their meanly gorgeous accompaniments, are teaching us to feel as if religion were more a form of sensuous luxury than a strenuous exercise and discipline of the spirit; and they are tending to throw the emphasis on man's part in it to the suppression of God's. We feel as if worship were the creation of a fragrant atmosphere and musical speech in honour of Deity, which are excellent in the degree that they afford joy, pleasure, and satisfaction to man; but we forget that the speech of God, prophetic,

evangelical, apostolical, is needed, in order, by bringing Him down into our midst, to lift us up into His presence. For in worship there must be a double activity—God's as well as man's. Praise and prayer are our acts, but the creative inspiration is His. If all the energy is ours, we but speak into vacancy; He must possess our spirits that our acts may be done unto Him and as in His presence. And so worship is not made perfect by a sensuous harmony that knows no discord, but by soul and conscience so open to God that spiritual, moral, evangelical, eternal truth shall come from Him out of heaven into our hearts, to make us fit for living and capable of dying. The older ideal of worship created the older strength, which was yet so winsome and genial and tender, because so awed by the presence and so subdued by the gentleness of the God who was the Shepherd of men.

II. The Psalm and the Psalmist.

This is said to be "A Psalm of David," but the man who made the psalm did not write the superscription. It was added by some later hand, the scribe or editor who arranged the Psalter. Who made it no man can tell, and it is what no man need know to feel its inspiration. A song or prayer may be all the mightier for being nameless, for then it is not so much a man's as a people's; it lives as the voice, not of a person or a time, but of the race and the ages. And here the true and enduring things are not those peculiar to any individual, but those that are common, personal to each, yet universal as man. But if this psalm was to stand under any man's name, there was none fitter than David's. It embodies his spirit; it is like the clarified soul of all he

thought and purposed and achieved, so incarnated as to breathe for evermore the quickening breath of life. And the ideal truth is made more real by being wedded to an actual person. For let us think what manner of man David was. Born a peasant, he yet became a monarch, the ideal king and poet of his people. In the sheepfold, where he tuned his pipe as he watched his flocks, and used his sling that he might guard his lambs, he learned how to fill the highest office in the state. The music which had charmed his own soul he used to subdue the savage in the breast of Saul; yet he suffered from the savage he could not wholly expel. The man who had failed to be a king saw and feared and hated the king in the man he had taken from the sheepfold and the hills of Bethlehem, where he had watched the great stars that globed themselves in heaven, and the sun coming out of the east like a bridegroom from his chamber, and the moon that walked at night in beauty. But to be hated of Saul was to be loved of the people; and in a tempestuous time, when a strong hand was needed to create order, he came to the throne by the natural right which most surely expresses the Divine vocation. Yet he was by no means a sinless man. Strong passions were in him; they had slumbered in the simple life of the hillside and the sheepfold; they had been held in check by necessity when he had to rule the lawless spirits of Adullam; they had been governed by discipline and duty when he had to be the active and organizing head of a still chaotic state; but they still lived within him, unvanquished, waiting their opportunity. And this opportunity came when, depraved by success, he forgot his duty as a man and his work as a king, and clothed himself with pride. It was then that temptation fell upon him, and he stained his soul with sins

which made him an offender against God, a reproach to man, and a shame to his kingdom.

We may explain, but we dare not extenuate, his sin. He was an Oriental, and passion lives under the hot Eastern sun. He was a king, but virtue is hard to the man who feels no limit to his power save the fear of God. He was an Oriental king in a rude age when passions were as free as they were violent. His sin was but an ordinary and venial offence for his day and rank. What was extraordinary was his remorse for it; and whence came this remorse? Crime is against the law of man, which can be satisfied with punishment; sin is against God, who can be satisfied only by the renunciation of the sin and the repentance of the sinner. So in the sense of crime there is but fear of law; in the sense of sin there is the horror of a soul estranged from the only Source of its life. And this was what possessed David. If manhood loses self-restraint, the loss is more utter than when lost by youth; and it is more seldom regained. But here there was recovery. For the man who had greatly sinned deeply repented, and out of his repentance came the sorrow, the suffering, the shame that even the forgiveness of God could not altogether remove, though His grace changed them into new sources of inspiration and song. The highest saint is he who never knew sin; the humblest saint is he who through utter remorse for sin passes into the completest surrender to God. Learn from David that it is better so to live as never to need repentance; but if you have so lived as to need it, then let your repentance be the renunciation of all sin and the pursuit of all holiness.

But this psalm, if it was David's, came before his sin. It has a purity as of innocence, while sin stains not only

the soul, but all it touches. It can never be the same soul after that it was before the sin. The wound may heal, but the scar remains. But here there is trace neither of wound nor scar. We may say, then, that this is a young man's psalm, not an old man's. Youth is in its elevation, its sense of joy in nature; its very trouble, yet peace in the face of death. Death is not to an old what it is to a young man. The old man reconciles himself to death, and feels as if it were part of nature. He has known life in its bitterness, known man in his weakness; has come to feel that it is better that life be rounded and completed by death than drawn out to an indefinite length. But to a young man death is a contradiction of all he thinks and feels. His being seems to be destined for eternity; and for an eternal being to be confronted and ended by death, is, as it were, to be in his very essence abolished or unmade. He feels, therefore, that death has no right to be; that for man to pass under it is to endure something he was never intended to suffer. And so the young think more of death than the old; feel death to be more terrible, more a contradiction than a fulfilment of being. But here faith fulfils its promise, and the presence of God changes the death that dissolves our mortal being into the way to immortality.

If this psalm, then, is David's, it belongs to the period when the future monarch was still the shepherd. Nature and life were to him parables, which he interpreted into revelations of God. He saw in his own shepherd's thoughtfulness for his flock and care for the individual lambs a type of God's providence for man. As his sheep lay and fed on the green pastures, or wandered in the sultry days of summer beside the still waters, he thought of himself held

in the hands of God. As he went watchful into some dark valley, prepared to defend his lambs against the lions or bears that lodged amid the crags and trees of its frowning sides, he found himself treading the way down to death, and felt that, guarded by the rod and staff of God, he would fear no evil. And then as he thought of the rest beyond the dark valley, there came into his mind the image of a pleasant land and a kindly host, who had just welcomed a hungry, footsore, and dusty traveller, and washed his feet, anointed his head, and set before him a full and rich repast; and in all this he saw the picture of his own soul wearied but saved, entering into the house of God to abide in blessedness for ever. Surely that was to the psalmist a happy prospect. A life here spent in green and watered places under the guardian care of God; a life hereafter passed in His house amid fulness of joy and peace for evermore; and between, the valley of death, lying indeed in sable shadow, but the presence of God making light about his spirit, and the rod and staff of God giving to his soul quietness and assurance. Even so, "let me live the life of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

II.

THE EXPOSITION.

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"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."—Ps. xxiii.

"THE Lord." I do not like this word Lord. It expresses an idea altogether alien to the term it represents. "The Lord" translates here the name we so often use as Jehovah without knowing what it means, but to the men that used it it was a most significant name. It said, God is, He alone is, all others seem to be. It further said, He is a Person; for you use a name that describes Him as "He who is"—a living, conscious, personal Will. But it said more: He is One who stands by His word, who abides by His promise. Why did Israel come to be? God had chosen him. Why had God chosen him? For His own ends, not for those of Israel. To name God, therefore, "He who stands by His promise," was to say, What God purposed He will perform.

He can never be false to Himself, and this is the highest of all standards of faithfulness and truth. Men often say, God will be faithful to His promise; but this is the very lowest kind and measure of faithfulness. For higher than the faithfulness to His spoken or His written word, is His faithfulness to God. Were a child of ours to trust us no further than we had given him black and white for it—the cold but authentic terms of a legal or written bond—would there be any trust at all? The bond might be trusted, but not the parent; the bond supplanting the loving and personal trust which is equal joy to the father and to the child. So God is to be trusted for what He is, not simply for what He has said. He is made known in His Word, but only that He may be trusted far beyond it. Here we walk by faith, yet faith that is grander than sight. If I trust Him who has made me, then I can feel everywhere in His presence and always at home. The name Jehovah, then, ought not to be translated by a term merely expressive of dominion—ownership on the one side and bondage on the other; still less, as a late distinguished critic recommended, by "the Eternal," for "the Eternal" is but an abstract phrase, denotive of duration, but giving no character, ascribing no moral quality to what endures. Jehovah is a covenant name, expresses the love and care of Him who makes the covenant for those on whose behalf it is made; and they, when they use it, confess their love of Him and abiding faith in His faithfulness. Hence, if we must translate it, the fittest word were "Father." What God is as Father to us He was as Jehovah to Israel. No distant sovereign, no autocratic king, no arbitrary monarch, but a gracious God, faithful to Himself, and therefore to men.

"My Shepherd." We have even greater difficulty in

understanding the word "Shepherd" than Jehovah. We are too modern to realize what it means. We understand the successful merchant—the man that makes his fortune, that builds his barns and fills them to bursting. We understand the successful legislator—the man who by eloquence persuades the people, and works through the people his will. We understand the successful soldier—the man who can, out of a multitude of men, make one vast machine that he can, as it were, hurl at an enemy and break him into pieces. We understand the city and its ways; the author and his works. But the shepherd lies away far behind us, or out in phases of society so simple as to be alien to us and to our modes of thought and life. But think what shepherd meant to the ancient Hebrew men. Abraham was a shepherd, and had watched his flocks by his tent door at Mamre. Isaac was a shepherd, who walked in quiet meditation through his fields and amid his herds in the still eventide. Jacob was a shepherd, whose pastoral life was a strange blending of idyllic beauty and lust of gain. Moses was a shepherd, and was tending the flocks of Jethro his father-in-law when he saw the bush that burned yet was not consumed, and was called to be the saviour and lawgiver of his people. David was a shepherd, and was taken from the sheepfold, where he had tended the flocks great with young, to be the lord and the king of Israel. And so the fondest and most ideal memories of the Hebrew men were pastoral and steeped in pastoral associations. The men who most symbolized God's care for His own people had lived the simple shepherd's life. What, then, so fit as that they should think of God under this, to them, holy and hallowed form? The great Father was the tender Shepherd of loving men; He watched the

young, tended the feeble, called home the errant, was ever ready with His gracious and helpful presence, and His guardian and helpful eye to seek and to save. The word was significant to the men, "The Lord is my Shepherd." All I can be to my flock God is to me.

But God acts according to the name He bears, and His people's experiences correspond to His action. There is the most comprehensive trust: "I shall not want"—neither now nor at any future period, whether as to body or soul, in time or in eternity. The assurance is most positive, but the expectation most modest. It is not, "I shall have wealth or abundance; God will make this the best of all possible worlds for me;" but simply, "I shall not want." Yet it is large. "Not to want" is to be wholly satisfied, and this surely is the wealthiest state. Many a rich man has had a devouring sense of poverty, because devoid of the only good that can satisfy. Leanness of flesh may bring the truest blessing, just as the most awful famine God can send is fatness of flesh and leanness of soul. Want is just the desire to possess what we are conscious of not possessing; and if the thing we desire be in its own nature unsatisfying, it is impossible that we can ever be satisfied. And this is the state of the want that is poverty. Men who feel it are devoured by care, and suffer more from anticipation of want than from the want they anticipate. If a man will take over out of the hands of Providence into his own as it were the very responsibilities of God, he will be a miserable god unto himself. But it is needful to be clear as to what trust means. We trust God by serving, not by leaving all to the God we trust. To fail to be dutiful is to distrust. "Take no thought for the morrow" does not mean "do no work

to-day." Rather it means, To-day must be filled with duty, that thought may be free from care, and to-morrow full of happiness. He who would face life with the feeling that he will not want, must face it as the birds of the air do, doing in each day the duty fit for it, doing in each season the duty fit for it, remembering this, that the basis of all right to trust in God is obedience to the God that is trusted. Only, therefore, as duty is done, as man obeys, has he a right to say, "I shall not want."

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Think how beautiful and suggestive the "green" is. "Green pastures." We hardly, indeed, know the gratefulness of greenery, for it is everywhere in this country, and we need never feel its want. Men come out of the East and out of the West to this land of rich green grass and of turf centuries old, and soft underfoot, and as they walk over it and look at it with eyes full of pleasure, they ask wondering, How came it to be? Familiarity has made us so insensible to its beauty that we do not hunger after it, in eye and foot and soul, as does the traveller of the desert or the voyager of the sea. But away in the land where this psalm was written, green was so grateful because so rare. The hot sun high overhead, the blistering sand underfoot, and the dry river-bed by the wayside, made the shepherd suffer with his weary flock; and they panted together and in sympathy for the soft, shady greenery and the grateful brook. And into pleasant and sheltered places God leads the man who trusts in Him. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." As the green pastures are grateful, so still waters are soothing. There is music in the soft sound—

"The noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune."

And what sounds so softly creeps into the soul and creates rest and peace. Did you ever seek to escape from the sound and sights and pressure of a crowded city, that you might rest far from the haunts of passionate and eager men? In such a mood you love a quietness which the murmur of the madding crowd cannot reach to disturb; and perhaps you have sought it in a Highland glen, remote from cities. But bickering down the glen comes a Highland burn, brawling as it leaps from stone to stone, or rushes round the boulder that bars its way and divides its waters. And all night through in the lonely inn you have lain awake listening to the brook, as it babbled and brawled, until the pleasant has become a fretful sound, and you have wished to be beside stiller waters. But when you need a quiet as well as a shady place, and are led of God, He will guide you beside streams that by their very murmurs make sweetness and beget repose. "He giveth his beloved sleep;" and, in the sleep of God, blissful rest and holy refreshment shall most surely come.

Rest in such lives as we are forced to live has a great and necessary place. We all know the season of exhaustion, when the lightest effort is a burden. In all duty there is endeavour, in all endeavour toil. Where work has become but play it has ceased to be discipline, and even spontaneous effort spends energy that must be repaired and restored. Idleness is more tiring than work; indolence is at once the most exhausting labour and the most exacting master. But to those who have not the monotonous weariness of

idleness, but the constant exhilaration of work, rest must come lest they faint by the way; for we live in a mixed world, where there is friction and strain enough to create weariness and exhaustion, even if we had nothing in ourselves. We all of us have at times to meet or work with men whose speech provokes and whose very presence pains. It is not given to many to have a completely congenial sphere, and we all know the mood when to transact business is a misery, and to be active in its modes or ways a reproach or a shame. Even the ministry of the home, where love reigns and where it is made to sweeten the bitter things of life, has an exhaustion of its own. There are wives and mothers, matrons and widows, who suffer day by day from the hard and anxious labour of making the two refractory ends of a diminishing income and an enlarging expenditure meet and harmonize. We have still with us Martha with her trouble of much serving, and Mary with her inconsolable sorrow. We meet and admire the chastened face without knowing the issue of blood it hides, that has been running unseen for years; we enjoy the jest which plays on the witty tongue, but we do not know the care which is eating out the heart. Yet, whatever the state or need of man, one thing is clear—that to him who trusts in God and lives in daily fellowship with Him, there shall come rest and refreshment. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters."

"He restoreth my soul." Rest brings restoration; freshness comes out of refreshment. The rest which is taken for its own sake, only the more worries and wearies. The rest that is taken because duty has made it needful, and work has earned it, "restoreth the soul." The man

lives after it as if he were a new man; work becomes a pleasure; the renewed strength loves new exercise. So, when God has refreshed, He shows the way to duty and new endeavour.

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness"—which are ever the right paths; often steep and thorny, but ever with a gracious ending. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." For He who leads has the highest end in view—"for His name's sake." The end God conducts us to is one that becomes His fatherly character and purpose. He acts in a way worthy of Himself, and for us God's ends must ever remain better than our own.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." The figure is still pastoral. The flock that has rested in the green meadow and by the still waters must seek fresh fields and pastures new; but between the new fields and the old lies a gloomy and frowning gorge. In it is no water, or verdure, or any green thing. On either hand rise the steep hillsides, covered with mighty boulders, haunted by wild beasts, frequented by the hunted and hunting robber, pierced by the cave that hides one knows not what. To walk under its deep shadow and below its beetling cliffs is to feel the impotence of the man who moves within it and the danger of the flock he guards. Behind every boulder the beast of prey may lurk; in the deep shadows cruel eyes may watch the favourable moment for the deadly spring. And the gloom and the terror affect the flock even more than the shepherd. In him is courage, foresight, strength, and will; in them is cowering fear of nature and dependence on him. Where he is they fear no evil; without him, fear were the master

and they its slave. But to feel confidence in him is to be freed from danger and its terrors, which are the greatest danger of all. So does the writer think, not of death, but of the valley of the shadow.

It is dying that is terrible, and it is terrible as a shadow, for what it may hide, and not as a substance, or a reality, for what it is. There are many who do not fear death, but fear dying, though alike in death and dying, where the presence of God is, while there may be darkness, there can be no terror. There may be the long valley, but there is the gracious comfort of His presence. And what is the shadow to him beside whom God walks, save the light from beyond, which makes darkness in the eye that gazes full in its face? The radiance that streams out of eternity dazzles the vision like excess of light; but though excess of light be another name for darkness, it is a darkness in which we feel the strength of God and fear not any foe. Enough that He who leads guides us through the shadow into his own eternal home.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." The figure is most fitly changed. Instead of the shepherd there is now the host. We can imagine the scene; the valley of the shadow of death has been passed, and the shepherd has led his flock out into a clear and open space. Behind him gather the dark faces and forms that had made the terror of the way; but before him is a spacious tent, and a table laden with refreshment and food, and a gracious host who receives the traveller and his wearied flock. He is led into the tent, and there the cooling and grateful oil is poured upon his head; his blistered feet are bathed; he is

clothed in new raiment and then is led forth, and set down at the prepared table, while the enemies that had thronged in the valley see his safety and envy his rest. The table is not a mere figure of speech for food ; it speaks of entertainment and cheer and friendship. He who invites us to his home and table gives us more than a meal. Hospitality is not charity. Charity may simply feed the hungry and clothe the naked ; but hospitality welcomes the friend, opens the house and makes it into the home, and says, " Use it as if it were thine own, and whatsoever thou requirest ask, and it shall be given unto thee." So in the mansion of the Father we shall enjoy not the charity, but the hospitality, of God. His mansion is the home of His sons.

So when the trouble of dying is over, and the Shepherd has led the troubled soul through, when the last look of time has been taken, the last word uttered, and the last kiss been given and received, then the shadow lifts, the night of death breaks into the morning of heaven, and the soul stands in eternity before the open and gracious face of God. The sorrows of the way are all forgotten, the eternal rest has come, and, in the festival of reconciliation and return, the soul sits at the table of the Father. " Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

NATURE AND FAITH IN THE PRESENCE OF DEATH.

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"And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."—GEN. xxiii. 3, 4.

"And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."—LUKE xxiv. 5, 6.

"These all died in faith."—HEB. xi. 13.

THESE texts present death to us under three most dissimilar aspects, enable us to see it from three distinct and supplemental points of view. The first opens as it were a glimpse into the patriarchal world, and shows how its large and tender simplicity knew our common human griefs. Sorrow is as old as man, and man has never loved the sorrow that came to sadden, and, as it seemed, impoverish his life. Here is Abraham, a man the ages were to honour as the friend of God, standing up to confess in the face of the stranger that, while he might not fear or hate his own death, he could not love the death of her he loved. To lose his Sarah was to the old man sadder than to lose his life. The friendship of God had but made his heart tenderer —had softened his sorrow, but deepened his sense of loss— and so he was all the lonelier for his great piety as he

asked the sons of Heth for a grave in which to bury his dead out of his sight.

The second text carries us into one of the most transcendent moments of history. The women who had loved and followed Jesus came to His grave, hopeless, sorrowful, to anoint His dead body. His death had been the saddest time had known, and had seemed the worst doom. Men had hated the Supreme Good, had handled the divinest Person as they were wont to handle the basest. Yet, He was then, and was to be for ever, only the lovelier in His death. His visage, now marred more than any man's, is touched with a pity so godlike that men have come to feel as if the heart of God looked its whole eternity of love through it. But the crowd had not so felt; it had demanded the cross, had got the cross, and the hate that looked through its eyes had come in winged and poisoned taunts from its tongue. Yet, when the priest and the people have had their way, God means to have His, though His way did not at once appear. They crucified Jesus, and they allowed love to find Him a grave. For the morrow was a holy day, which, in the eyes of those who loved law but hated righteousness, would be defiled unless some kindly tomb received the dead. So formalism gave to piety a golden opportunity of sad yet sacred service, to bleeding love the sweet solace of the last tender ministry, so unheeded by the dead, so consoling to the living. When the sunlight dies the starlight lives; so now a love that had been hidden in the day of prosperous strength stole out like a calm and peaceful orb in this night of adversity and death. To Joseph of Arimathæa Jesus seemed lovelier in His cruel and forsaken death than even in His beautiful and beneficent life, and so to him it was a gracious permission to be allowed to lay

the wasted body of the Crucified in his own new tomb. There He slept the mysterious sleep men call death, while the city held its Passover, and the enslaved people tried to believe that God had once set them free. The grave was still and dark, but over its silent darkness the Spirit of God was brooding, bringing a new humanity to birth. The city was noisy and bright, but the lean and merciless fingers of death were closing round its heart, which was beating with convulsive throbs prelusive of the last pulsation. Men walk in a vain show, see but painted and passing shadows, see not the eternal realities they conceal. They thought death was in Joseph's tomb, life in the palaces of Pilate and the priest. And they thought but as they saw. Even love was blind, did not come to see the angel of the resurrection sitting within the vacant home of death. But love while it sought the dead found the living; to it the last revelation of God came, and on its eyes fell the first bar of the light which made life and immortality manifest to man. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen."

The third text shows us death as softened by distance, as it has rounded into completeness the life, making manifest its meaning, the source of its beauty, the secret of its strength. "These all died in faith," and nobler than the death they died was the life they lived. These men, who lived by the faith in which they died, are the worthiest known to man, the mightiest in their lives, the loveliest in their deaths. To their own age their meaning was not manifest; time had to be their interpreter. They made history, and so history loves to make mention of them. The memory of the just is blessed because the life of the just is a blessing.

But now these texts must not be studied simply in their isolation; they become more significant by being combined. As combined they help us the better to understand death, to feel possessed in its presence by true and consolatory thoughts. In Abraham rising up before his dead and speaking out of his great sorrow, his freshly realized loss and loneliness, to the sons of Heth, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight," there is expressed the instinct of nature as it stands face to face with death; the instinct which so wisely bids us, the more deeply we grieve, the more earnestly seek to bury whatever is perishable from our sight that only the imperishable may remain. In the women seeking that they may anoint their buried Lord, the devotion of the living to the dead and the hold of the dead on the living is manifested, while the voice from within the grave lifts our sense of loss into a consciousness of gain and fills our time with God's eternity. "The dead are not here; they are risen." Then in the words that describe how our sainted dead have died and what they still are, we hear as it were themselves speak and read the deepest lesson of their lives. "These all died in faith" means that they who live live best when they possess a like "precious faith." These texts, then, so connected and construed, will supply us with three points of view from which to contemplate the death of the good man.

I.

Our natural instincts in the presence of death. They stand expressed in Abraham's desire, "that I may bury my dead out of my sight." That death had been an

unspeakable loss to the old man. It was now many years since he and his Sarah had, hand in hand, left their common Chaldean home. Splendid hopes had shone upon the path which led the young patriarch and his fair wife towards the promised land. His quick and reverent eye had seen through the manifold idolatries of the then peoples to the eternal God, who made all things and loved all beings; and now, less sad but more noble than the first pair, the man led forth the woman that together they might found a people for God. Great was the purpose, but the performance seemed poor. Of the promised land no field, no rood, became his; the son through whom the people was to come was long delayed. The man remained a childless nomad, without home, without family, possessed of hopes that seemed born but to die. And in those years of weary waiting both natures seemed to suffer, though, as was but fit, the deepest suffering, least lightened by hope, came to the smaller spirit of the woman. But the man's broader nature, with its larger and more illumined horizon, touched, penetrated, assimilated the woman's, made it in the image, gave it the outlook of his own. And thus these two, mated in their brilliant youth, grew through a wandering and disappointed yet disciplinary life into a ripe and beautiful and hopeful old age, made by the son they loved younger and more bountiful than their earlier age had been.

Into this home, so much happier in its fruitful age than in its hopeful youth, death entered, and "Sarah died in Kirjath-arba." The loss was more than the manhood of the old man could calmly bear, and he "came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." The oak round which the ivy has grown for years may well feel naked and cold when the clasping fibres are torn from its limbs and bark and

untwisted from its far-spreading roots. The old house will seem bare and forlorn when the honeysuckle which has clustered and blossomed on its walls for generations is rooted up and cast away. So this old man, in whose heart while yet young love of the beautiful Sarah had struck deep root, into whose large nature that love had grown till its soft presence filled and made fragrant every chamber, clasped and beautified every branch—might well feel when she fell by his side as if his own being had been cloven in twain, the fairer section perishing while only the sterner and barer remained. What death spared, or rather produced, was so strong and painful a contrast to the living and once beautiful form he had known and loved, that, fleeing as it were from its presence and touch, he stood before the sons of Heth and cried, "Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

This speech is a true expression of nature, the spontaneous utterance of the human spirit in the presence of death. The poet has said that "sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things;" but the worst remembrance, and so the sorest sorrow, is to be surrounded by memorials that are the negation of all that was most loved in the person remembered. The dead form is too much the contradiction of the living to be its fittest or most cherished memorial. Our true instinct is to hide the perishable from sense that the imperishable alone may survive as spirit for spirit. The immortal within us loves the immortal without us; and to immortal love the symbols of the perishing could but speak the language of mockery and insult. It is the saddest materialism to embalm so as to immortalize the poor body; to keep the dust, informed

by no quickening spirit, from returning to its kindred dust. It was the spirit that delighted, and when it has fled we can no longer feel to the body as if the spirit still dwelt there. Nature bids us bury the dead that faith and hope may regard the living, alive no longer with man but in God. Nature is here but the muffled voice of faith, which bids us seek our dead—not in a graveyard, however venerable and old; not in a cemetery, however new and ornate; but in heaven with God. It teaches the bereaved heart to say, "My dead are alive for evermore. I buried from my sight under yon green sod what was mortal, that no painful contrast between what died and what has everlasting life might remain to sadden. The being I knew and loved now knows and loves in God."

You see then, brethren, how our common and natural yet most Christian instinct speaks through Abraham. And has it not also spoken in and through ourselves? Have you never felt what a burden and a gloom lies on our homes while our dead are unburied? The interval between death and burial seems like one long fearful shadow of death. And why? Because mind, thought bound to the poor clay, becomes materialist, faith is paralyzed, and we can only feel that a being once breathing thoughtful breath, once loved and loving, now lies inanimate—cold as the eternal ice. But once the inanimate form is carried forth and buried from our sight, faith becomes emancipated and hastens to awaken hope, and these blissful sisters, led by love, return into the heart like true angels of the resurrection to sing hymns that subdue sorrow, and even change it into joy. Then we do not so much remember that dust has been committed into dust as that "the soul has returned unto the God who gave it."

II.

But we can now advance from our natural instinct to our Christian faith in the presence of death. In making this advance we fitly enough note that the faith but confirms, verifies, enlightens the instinct, and it is also most fit that we should best see this beside the empty grave of our Saviour. Look at the women who had come to it. They believed Him dead, perished in a tragedy the most tragic the world had ever seen. He had changed and brightened their lives, but now He, the Saviour of others, unsaved Himself—betrayed, deserted, crucified—had died; His last strength exhausted in that cry of fell despair, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But the desolation of His end had only the more evoked their love, and so they came to have the last look of His beautiful, though blood-stained face, bringing spices with which to breathe perfume into His charnel cave. But what they expected to be a house of death they found a gate of life; in the darkness there was light, for where He had lain, there the angels of God sat, saying, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen."

That history is a message to all Christian mourners. That empty grave means that all graves are empty; that death was vanquished, and life and immortality brought to light. The grave-clothes scattered through the sepulchre were symbols that the bands of death were broken, while the angel-watchers were types of what glorified men should be. And the Saviour, who had bowed His lordly head to death, mindful, as He appears to the women, of the agony, of the drear desolation the soul may feel as the waters of death close above it, sends through them the message to all

the ages, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." And we who live, that we may know where our loved dead are and rejoice even while we sorrow, join those words with these: "I will come again and take you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

What the mourner owes to the risen Christ is more than heart can conceive. He gave us our faith in God, the Everlasting Father, whose heart is infinite mercy, whose love, immense and free, holds us in its arms and calls us, even in our sin, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. He gave us our faith in a Providence which counts our every hair, dries our every tear, watches our steps, guides our ways, and pours over the darkest cloud the sheen of His unchanging pity. He gave to us our faith in immortality, which reveals to us an eternity of divine love, of boundless joy, of holiest worship of God, of sweetest fellowship with men and angels. And all these gifts live before us corporate and imperishable in the Person who has issued from the grave, who alone of the living has come forth from among the dead. For whither does He go? He ascends to His Father and His God. Whence He came, thither He goes; out of the bosom of God He issued, into the bosom of God He returns. And that home because His is ours. He had said, "In My Father's house are many mansions: . . . I go to prepare a place for you." And the act which made the grave empty marked the moment of departure, the hour when the God who gave the Son resumed the Son He gave. For us that same God now stands on the other side of birth to send us here, on the further side of death to receive us there; and the course which lies between birth and death is a channel made by

the hollow of His hand. And however lonely the soul may feel as it travels along the path that divides the hidden past from the hidden future, yet it is never alone; the Father is with it. And where He guides and man is guided, the grave may be the goal of the body, but God is the Home of the soul, which is the man. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen."

III.

But it is not enough to see our natural instincts in the presence of death enlarged and illumined by Christian faith; it is no less necessary to look from the standpoint of faith at the life which death has at once ended and made complete. This our third text enables us to do; it helps us to see the significance alike of the life and the death of the faithful. It was by a happy inspiration that the author of Hebrews was led to invoke the holy and illustrious dead as proofs of his thesis, as witnesses to the truth that by faith men pleased God, became acceptable in His sight, the efficient and beneficent agents of His will. The author had found a unity of meaning and purpose in the dispensations, the covenants old and new; he was now to reveal a deeper unity of mind and spirit in the ages. The men who had died in faith had lived by it; and the dead who had thus lived were made here, so to speak, as to witness to the continued action of God in men, and by so witnessing to cheer the faint and failing hearts of the living. A saintly ancestry is a splendid inheritance—an inheritance of honoured names, of bright examples of the qualities that constitute the higher heroisms. And the heir who can, though but dimly, estimate the value of such an inheritance,

can never be without ennobling inspirations, must ever be conscious of a kinship with the good that will not allow him to be ignoble, or become base. When the glorious company of the sainted fathers are made

> "The dead but sceptred sovrans, who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns,"

their rule creates in our spirits qualities akin to their own. Their society makes us fear no solitude; makes us even within the petty present feel the fellowship of a mighty past and a glorious future; makes us in our better moments stand, as it were, on a sunlit summit, far above the mists of the valley, or the smoke of cities, or the clouds of time, and as we look before, after, and around, see the beauty of the higher life, and feel its community with our own. And it was to such a summit and into such a society that the author led his Hebrew readers when he bade them note the men of faith, what faith had made the men and what the men had done by faith, and what, as doers of mighty deeds, they had to say to the men of the present who were burdened by the past, forced to do battle against an old and exhausted law and for a new and glorious gospel. The men who had lived and died in faith had become a "great cloud of witnesses," surrounding that they might the better guide and inspirit the men who had still, beset by sin and burdened by infirmity, to run their appointed race.

The points emphasized are these: Faith made the life good, pleasing to God and beneficent to man; and death made the life fruitful, a means whereby it became creative of good, a testimony to the wisdom and beauty, the strength and glory of righteousness. Life may have many aspects to the living. Now it seems a series of disappointments, whose good is altogether illusive; again it appears as a

selfish struggle for existence, where the race is always to the swift and the battle to the strong, and the best happiness the weak can know is to die for the good of the mighty. But life is best judged when judged most nobly; in the highest view of life there is inspiration, in the lowest discouragement and despair. And the highest view is the view of faith; to it man is no vain dream, but the son of God, immortal as his Parent; time no scene of selfish struggle, but an arena which disciplines for eternity. The men who live by faith do not feel as if their lives were moments in the being of the eternal silence, but rather forc-gleams of the eternal day. Faith sets man in the centre of the divine harmonies, makes him know peace with God, unites his brief life with the everlasting mind, and turns himself into a vehicle of the eternal purpose, an agent of the living will which alone endures for ever. So the man who dies in faith lives unto eternity, has his place in the purpose of the ages and his home in the bosom of God.

LIFE IN SECULAR RETROSPECT AND IN SPIRITUAL PROSPECT.

LIFE IN SECULAR RETROSPECT AND IN SPIRITUAL PROSPECT.

"And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."—GEN. xlvii. 9.

"For I through the law died to the law, that I might live unto God."—GAL. ii. 19.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."—2 TIM. iv. 8.

IN these three verses two remarkable and illustrious men describe their respective relations to life and immortality. In the first text Jacob, hoary, feeble, the tremulous shadow of his former self, looks, as he stands before Pharaoh, back on the busy and eventful years behind him, in which lofty ideals and low cunning, high promise and mean achievement, had been often so painfully intermingled, and, with the plaintive truthfulness of an old man, pronounces them to have been "few and evil." In the other texts Paul appears in two consistent and related moments. In the first he is in the maturity of his manhood, with all his manifold energies in fullest exercise, in the midst of his conflict against the timid belief of the men who had been baptized into Christ but had not put on Christ, and against the cold antagonism of the men who would lose Christ by subjecting Him to Moses. Yet the conflict does

not sour the sweetness or lower the loftiness of his spirit. And so he is able calmly to define his relation to the past and the principle by which he lives in the present. "I died to the law, that I might live unto God." In the second of these apostolic texts the same Paul, now the aged —weary, infirm, the dew of death on his brow, but the fire of enthusiasm unextinguished in his heart—looks from his Roman prison, not back upon the life he has so nobly tried to live unto God, but, with the buoyant hopefulness born of strenuous faithfulness, forward into his everlasting home, and anticipates the blessedness of being "for ever with the Lord." The men have different moods and feelings, corresponding to the differences of their natures and of the ends which had regulated the lives they had lived or were living.

Considered in the most superficial way, these verses are eminently suggestive. Here is an old man, whose life has been on the whole a secular success, who had earned both by nature and conduct the name Jacob, the supplanter, though later by equal right he had won the name of Israel, the soldier of God, the conqueror. His life was now closing amid comfort and peacefulness; mind and conscience were restful, and his father's heart was gratified at the sight of one son the Grand Vizier of Egypt, the most splendid of the then existing empires, and of the rest provided with a home in the most favoured and privileged province of that favoured and privileged land. Yet that successful old man thinks, as he looks back on his long life, that its years have been swift and few; that the very intensity with which he had tried to seize and to hold the goods they had brought had only made them, like sand, run the more quickly through his fingers, and now all that remained was old age and in-

firmity. The secular life seems to the retrospective eye of spiritual age a succession of disappointments—illusions which gave splendid promises, but yielded only failures. Then here is a good man who has made the greatest surrender a good man can make—the surrender of the traditions and faith of his Fathers, of the ambitious ideals and hopes of his youth, though the surrender had been in obedience to conviction and conscience. And he has now come to speak of the principle which guides his present life, and determines all his thoughts and actions. He has died to self and sin that he might live unto God. Then here, again, is the same man, looking like Jacob back on the life he has lived, and forward, as Jacob had not done, to the life yet to be, and feeling that to have lived to God was to have made life worth living here, while making it also the prelude of the eternal life with God in the hereafter. We can see and say what he could not have seen, and would not have said—that his life was a series of splendid successes achieved by the most absolute sacrifice of all that was selfish and self-regarding, and the most absolute consecration to means which were Christ's and ends which were God's. And we can also see him as leaving the past to God, and to God death and the eternity beyond it, he is so raised above time and death as to be unconscious of the failures of the one or the terrors of the other, lost in the blissful contemplation of "the crown of righteousness" reserved for him in heaven.

We have here, then—

I.

Life in secular retrospect; *i.e.* life as seen, bounded and defined by time. The retrospect is that of an old

man whose career had been distinguished by well-contrived success. Jacob says to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." The scene has a pathos of its own, and is beautiful while pathetic. On the one side is the ancient Jacob resting on his staff, the once crafty mind softened into the simplicity of its second childhood, the once firm will enfeebled; the man once so resourceful, helpless, yet clad in the venerable dignity of age. On the other side is Pharaoh, surrounded with the colossal wealth and magnificence of that Egypt whose monuments still witness to its once massive but now vanished glory. The sight of the old man touches the heart of the king. The feebleness and guilelessness of age, no less than of infancy, melt the haughtiest spirit into meekness and love; and so the proud monarch condescends to be familiar. "How old art thou?" he asks; and the old man sadly answers, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

These may well seem strange words to us. Jacob was a very old man; his days were almost double the "allotted span," yet he says they were "few," and doubtless they now seemed as brief as few. Time, though slow in passing, is short in retrospect; hours may move with leaden feet, but years are swift and noiseless as an angel in their flight. Had Methuselah stood where Jacob did, and been asked the same question, he would have given the same answer. The moments of life bear no comparison to the possibilities of the soul. Time is narrow and fleet, and mind does not accomplish in it all the works it has purpose and faculty to perform. The finished are nothing to the unfinished works

of man. Every human life is but a fragment, a broken column, a dawn setting in night without ever breaking into sunrise; or, at best, a thin silver streak running from east to west, leaving the immense spaces to north and south in utter darkness. Mind has been made for eternity, and so time cannot exhaust its capabilities; must, however long, seem to the soul short, transitory as the lightning-flash which leaps from the bosom of darkness, and in a moment vanishes again, swallowed up in the blackness of the illimitable night. And so mind, feeling within it those unexhausted capabilities, feeling, too, how little scope time has allowed for their exercise, can only turn a tearful eye to the past, and say, "Few have the days of the years of my life been."

But Jacob says his years were "evil" as well as "few." They had had indeed to record many acts of deceitfulness, selfishness, sin. He had deceived his brother, deceived his father, deceived his father-in-law, and, like all very clever men, he had, becoming the victim of his own subtlety, deceived even himself. But his clever cunning had belonged to his earlier career, and he was now reading it with the simpler and more truthful eyes of his honourable age. He had thrown off his first and evil self when he wrestled all night with God, and had issued from the conflict a changed man, because a man who had seen God's face. And henceforth he had lived a life such as became the son of Isaac and the heir of Abraham—a man whose growing sanctity made him a fit and noble witness for Jehovah. And yet he says, "My days have been evil, have failed to fulfil their promise, have been barren of good and fruitful of ill."

So understood, the text may teach us salutary truths. No life, viewed as within the limits of time and inspired by its

spirit, is in any real sense a triumph—must be more or less of a failure. The soul does not, living within the limits of time and as unto time, however honourable its life, reach the highest excellence possible to it. For the very best life is evil compared with what it ought to be, or was designed to become. The soul cannot expand its immortal faculties in any period of mortal existence, and it carries with it, on the very brink of the grave, a reserve of unused energies that throws on the life that once promised them exercise the blame of failure. Then, the old man has a wealth of experience and wisdom that causes his earlier career to wear to his retrospective eyes a foolish and misguided appearance. He feels that if he had his youthful energy with his aged experience, he would lead a life worthier of the nature and destiny of a man God has made for Himself. He feels it sad to die just when he sees what he ought to be, and what the world needs. He laments that when heart and head are wisest, hand and will are weakest, and so, out of the sense of feebleness and failure, the complaint comes, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage have been few and evil."

The meaning of Jacob's lament is this—life, as secular in means, temper, and ends, never fulfils the promise of its opening, and cannot bear the judgment of its close. And this truth is consolatory while saddening. The promise of its opening was the promise of an immortal life, and a mortal being cannot fulfil an immortal promise. The judgment of its close is but the judgment of a heart feeling as if the fragment behind it were the whole, and so angry that what had seemed prophecies had turned out illusions, and it has to go down to the grave without the large scope and space of being which its energies needed for fruition.

Man, like seed sown in a frame, springs up early and promises soon to flower, but ere the flower has blossomed he is transplanted from his own garden into one which lies outside all his time has known, and he feels, in the shock of transplantation, as if the fragrancies and beauties that were in him were lost before they had blushed into being. "The days of the years of my pilgrimage have been few and evil."

II.

Life in spiritual prospect: "I through the law died to the law, that I might live unto God." The distinction between the secular and spiritual view of life is this: the secular measures life by days and years; the spiritual judges it by its moral qualities, the eternal forces it embodies, and the ends it has in view. The secular life is life defined by time; the spiritual is life defined by its intrinsic worth and immortal capabilities. It is under this aspect that Paul loves to view it. Years cannot to him express what it is or means. It is an arena on which two worlds struggle; within the body of his flesh, time and eternity, sin and holiness, God and Satan, contend for supremacy. Even his conception of sin is of something supernatural; it is a demoniacal power working according to its own laws, though in natural forms. As he conceives the end of life, it is not as mere termination of mortal existence, but as a destiny, as an ideal purpose formed by God that it might be realized by man; and what he conceives to be the great problem of living is to escape from the bondage of sin unto the freedom of living unto God. Two things, then, make up his spiritual view of life. One is an act of

renunciation; the other is an act of obedience or surrender to the divine purpose.

1. He represents renunciation under various forms; he speaks of it as a death to sin,[1] as a crucifixion of the old man,[2] as a being crucified to the world,[3] or with Christ.[4] The act, and the relation which gives its meaning to the act, are alike significant. To be crucified is to have our being ended, and ended by death. To be crucified with Christ is to have this ending through association with Him, because as it were of our being in corporate union with Him. And after this death there is to be no resurrection. The old man of sin has ceased to be; once crucified, he lives no more. The death is utter; the end complete. What this death is and means Paul has laboured by various figures to make plain. Here he tells us that by the law he died unto the law; later, in the Romans, that he has died to sin. But these are only different aspects of the same thing. To be dead to sin is to have escaped from it as a living and as it were organized power in our own lives; to be dead to the law is to be freed from the condemnation with which it visits this organized sin. To be dead to sin is to live in a region where sin has ceased to reign; to be dead to the law is to live in a realm where its penal authority has ceased to be exercised. We may bring the two ideas together by considering this: that sin has a double sense; it means a fact of nature, and an act of will; to sin is to be sinful. You cannot do a bad thing without becoming bad. The clock that will not keep time goes wrong because it is wrong. The broken violin will not obey the deftest hand that ever drew the bow over the tightened strings, and give out music at its

[1] Rom. vi. 2, 11. [2] Rom. vi. 6. [3] Gal. vi. 14. [4] Gal. ii. 20.

bidding. It has lost the harmony out of its soul, and so can have no harmony in its voice. So a man speaks an untruth because himself untrue. He who commits treason is treacherous—was false before he did falsely. Works are the words of the will, and where the will is evil its words will not be good. If a sin is bad, sinfulness is worse. To be a bad man is even more shameful than to do a bad thing; for the badness is permanent, the bad thing its transient expression. Sin, then, needs to be here understood as comprehensive of two things—viz. depravity, or the man's evil state or character; and disobedience, or the man's evil deeds. In order to lose the deed we must first lose the character.

To die to sin is the negative side of a change which has the new birth as its positive. To these correspond two events in the history of our Lord—His death on the cross, and His resurrection. By the one He died under the law; by the other He died to death—ceased to be mortal and became immortal, incapable of dying. So to be "dead to sin" is to pass out of its world, to cease to be ruled by it; to live a life sinfulness can no more destroy; to have our evil past obliterated by having our evil self annihilated. The butterfly that flits and glitters in the sunshine was once a caterpillar; but it died as a caterpillar that it might live its glad and beautiful insect-life. We who now speak and act like men once spoke and acted like children; but we died to our childhood that we might live to manhood. To be dead to sin is to cease from sinning, because we have ceased to be sinful.

This dying to sin was something unknown to Jacob. The past he could not escape threw its shadow upon his

nobler age. But the Christ who was crucified for sin, crucified sin in us, and made even on the scene of our old life a new life possible. This was Paul's experience, which he translated into the most consoling and delightful truth—"I have died to sin and the law." We often say there is a soul of goodness in things evil; and that soul lives and speaks in the bitter experiences by which the way of transgressors is made hard. But when the wisdom which so slowly lingers has at length come, it often brings the saddest of all feelings—the feeling that it has come too late; that change is hopeless, amendment useless. The greatest enemy of a good future is a bad past. There is a very awful continuity of being, binding our yesterdays, to-days, and to-morrows into an indissoluble series. There is no shadow that we can so little escape from as the shadow which is thrown by our own past. And the shadow is no empty form. Within are those awful forms we call habits, tendencies, tempers. Memory keeps its treasures or its trash, its weeds or flowers, its losses or gains, and will not allow the mind wishful to be good to forget that it once was evil. The will that has by often indulged infirmities grown strong in weakness, cannot very easily redeem its many self-inflicted defeats and reconquer strength; the heart gratified in its every whim finds self-denial hard; and the intellect long satisfied with the bad and the ignoble cannot readily see the glory of ethereal goodness or celestial truth. And an evil past is almost as remorseless and indestructible without the man as within him. Nothing perishes more slowly than a bad reputation. An evil character once won is not easily lost. Men do not willingly let it die. The wrong done in the past lives in the present alike in the man and his society. He must

therefore die to his past and be buried that he may escape from it. Till he has done so its power over him is invincible. There is no safety from sin like death to our own sinfulness.

2. So far we have seen the negative side of the spiritual view of life. It is a renunciation, a death to sin and so to the law. We must now consider the positive. It is a life to God, but to God because from God. This is what Paul means when he says, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." It is as if he had said, "Though I bear the name of a mortal man, and am known to all the Churches as Paul the apostle; to the Greeks as Paul the babbler, who brings strange things to their ears; to the Jews as the erewhile Saul, once the hope of the school and the pride of Rabbi Gamaliel; yet when I am so named and known it is only the mask or form of me. What in me lives is Christ, the Source of my life; its motives, its loves, its ends, are all His, in Him, and from Him; that which He inspires He owns; and so the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." What he means, then, is this: that in being crucified with Christ and dying to sin he has not only escaped an evil, but has come under the dominion of an eternal and transcendent good. The old life that was lost was a life in death; the new life that is gained is a life from God. His in origin and nature as well as His in purpose and end. The water of the world is but one body. Now it surges in the sea, now gathers and floats in clouds, now falls in rain, now glistens in dew, now glides in the streams, or rolls in the river majestic to the sea. But still it is one water, circling everywhere, everywhere homogeneous, capable of mingling all its parts into a mighty whole. So

the spiritual life of man is the life of God. It comes from Him, flows to Him, circulates through the world and through the ages, doing His work and obeying His will. We are the vehicles, but He is the living Substance we carry. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me."

Life, then, seen in spiritual prospect is life lifted out of the categories of time, freed from sin, filled with God, and made participant of His eternity. For it the flight of years has no significance; all its measures are infinite, and all its hopes are eternal. And so we can now change our standpoint, and ask how life at its close seems to the man who has "lived unto God."

III.

The spiritual retrospect of time becomes a peaceful and happy prospect of eternity. The retrospect is expressed in the words, "I have fought a good fight;" the prospect in the words, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." In both attitudes the contrast to the secular Jacob is immense. The life has been short compared with the patriarch's, full of larger troubles, intenser agonies, more unrewarded toil and sacrifices that brought no gain. But its years are not described as "few;" nay, rather its "course is finished" with joy—it forms a whole, rounded and complete. Nor does he speak of it as "evil;" it has been "good," even though it has been a "fight." As becomes a soldier of God, he has loved the battle, secured the victory, and now awaits the crown.

We may well mark him as he stands waiting the death that opens to him the gate of life. His eye had kept watch

not so much over the mortality as over the immortality of man. He was almost unconscious of death. It seemed to be abolished by the glory which streamed through it from the world beyond. He saw not the river and the old ferryman the ancients so much feared; he only saw the splendour, only heard the music, of the celestial city. And he imagined himself there "crowned" a king of God. The crown imperial Cæsar wore was beneath his ambition. It was founded on the sword, and by the sword maintained—blood, battle, and confusion were its ministers; but that to which he aspired was a "crown of righteousness"—kingship and saintship were to him one and the same. His royalty was to be the royalty of character; and so earthly bonds and imprisonments mattered not. Though the outcast of earth, he was the beloved of Heaven. He had often in vision divine lost the very consciousness of self—felt that he had no will save the will of God, and in holy ecstasy been unable to tell whether out of the body or in it. To heathen Romans he was Paul the Christian—a pestilent fellow, who deserved for his antagonism to the old gods to be imprisoned and executed; to Christians he was Paul the apostle, a father, the loved friend and counsellor, a messenger of God for good; to himself he was Paul the aged, whose season of usefulness was past, with the intense desire burning in his spirit "to depart and be with Christ." And often no doubt the desire was equal to the enjoyment, and though in body a prisoner in Rome, he was in spirit a dweller in heaven, wearing his "crown of righteousness."

And so death to him had died—been abolished by the life that even in this present had been eternal. For while his real life was hid with Christ in God, it was yet realized in time: for Christ lived in him, and the life he lived in the

flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God. Christ in him was the hope of glory; a hope that made the heart serene in the face of disaster, and created a radiant heaven in the spirit as it stood in the presence of death. And his faith was not selfish, but finely human and social; not to him only, but to all who loved the Lord Jesus, was the "crown of righteousness" to be given.

THE MISSION OF SORROW.

THE MISSION OF SORROW.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."—MATT. v. 4.

"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."—HEB. v. 7, 8.

WORDS of divine wisdom owe much to time; they become only slowly intelligible to eyes that by patient looking learn to read their secret. The stars have not changed since the eyes of the first man gazed into the midnight heavens. What we see he saw, only lighted by the softer splendour given by the serener air of the East. But while heaven as an expanse which the eye can survey is the same, how changed as an object the mind can conceive! The waiting and watching of many centuries, the discoveries of many thousands of telescopes, the inquiries, the calculations, the interpretative and speculative thoughts of many minds, have widened the starlit roof of the earth into a universe illumined with measureless suns, crowded with countless worlds. It needed only an eye to see the lights that made the lonesome night lovelier than the garish day, but it needed large experience and ripened thought to read the secret of their mazy paths. So the nature or the truth man interprets

may not change, but he changes, and his change may show him fathomless depths where he had once thought his foot or his staff could touch the bottom. Truth proves itself eternal by being inexhaustible, by increasing its volume and wearing its channel deeper as it flows down the ages, its channel being man, and its volume ever level with the rim of its bed. And so the divine word must outlive heaven and earth, for it lives through man and in mind.

Thus the words of both our texts always remain the same, but they take, according to the mind we bring, now a narrow and now a large meaning.

I.

Let us begin with the beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

This is a hard saying; experience is needed for its understanding. Imagine an innocent, sunny, untroubled nature, to whom laughter comes as easily and quickly as the ripple to the stream that, sunlit, runs radiant over its pebbly bed. Time has graven no sorrow on the memory, no trouble on the brow; has only created the sunshine in which the soul rejoices. And to such a nature what can the "blessed" mean but the brilliant, the mirthful, and the glad? Sorrow, or the mourning which is its expression, can only signify the shadow which seems cold and dark to the nature sunny and bright. And where comfort is not needed, how can its blessedness be understood? Imagine another case. A spirit in the hands of a great sorrow, the heart so smitten that all it feels is dull, cold, unspeakable pain. The consciousness of loss is too

keen to leave any sense of gain or any susceptibility to comfort. And where sympathy may not come, the comfort that makes the mourner blessed cannot be known. But we may imagine a third case. There has been love and loss; the happy youth or maidenhood lies far behind; the hour of grief with its dull stupor is overpast; calm has come, and the nature has emerged from its sorrow richer, more conscious of the infinite within and its kinship with the infinite without, feeling as if the brazen walls of sense had been thrown down, and the soul and its moment of time made suddenly to live in the bosom of eternity. Here the words of the promise are translated into realities of experience: "Blessed are they that mourned: for they have now been comforted."

If He who is to us the Son of God and the Saviour of man can so speak to the mourner, may we not say that sorrow has a mission which is like His own, divine? But so to speak of it will seem to many like a misuse of speech. Few things look less divine, more alien to God, more dreadful to man than suffering. We shrink from its touch, we fear its coming, we are chilled in its presence. The complaint that never ceases is—earth has too much evil, too little good. The shadow that darkens faith is cast by suffering; the cry that rises from our human grief makes the truth of eternal love sound discordant to the ear. The best apology of the world's doubt is the world's misery; and men who cannot reason can feel, and by feeling question whether God is, or, what is worse, whether if He be, He is good. For it were better to have no God than a God of imperfect goodness, and if sorrow can be explained only by His imperfect goodness, then indeed it were undivine—the worst and most terrible of preachers against that Paternal

mind whose thought made us, and whose recreative words we must hear if life is to be beautiful in its source, hopeful in its progress, and holy in its end.

But we need not fear, even in face of the intellect that argues and the heart that feels, to say—the mission of sorrow is divine. Whence come the complaints against it? From the lives that have tasted its bitterness? From the spirit tossed on a sea of troubles, and with wave after wave breaking overhead? Let us honestly interpret experience, though it be to our shame. The men that suffer most, complain least. The murmurs of the world do not rise from its smitten hearts. The bitterest lamentations as to their lot, or the severest accusations against the God who willed it, do not come from those who have known loss and sorest sorrow. It is almost proverbial to say that luxury is the fruitful nurse of discontent; that those most lifted above carefulness are the greatest victims of care. The charge against God for the misery of man does not come from the miserable, but from some student who has never faced a real embodied ill, and who thinks the world is evil and imperfect because he compares it with an unreal and painless ideal created by his own imagination. Worlds that exist in idea may be possible without sorrow, as they must be without joy; but worlds that exist in fact are good worlds only as they allow pain. For pain implies pleasure, and sorrow implies joy, just as there could be no shadow without sunshine. If we complain of evil, it is because we know the good. If we think we ought not to be miserable, it is because we have tasted happiness. The sense that pleasure is our right, pain is our wrong, has come whence? Out of the experience that has made misery the exception and happiness the rule. That experi-

ence has become the basis, as it were, of a prescriptive right to happiness. Our picture of what ought to be is painted from knowledge of what has been, and so our vision of a better time to come only proves the good of the time that is. Man expects to be blessed because blessed is what he has been. So the divine promise is but divine performance, though the burden it bears is the prophecy of a more perfect day.

But sorrow can have no divine mission unless it brings divine comfort. The blessing is only experienced through and in the comfort. Where consolation is not, desolation will be. While sorrow so holds possession of the soul as to admit no thought but the thought of loss, comfort is impossible. It is vain to say to the miserable, "Be happy;" to the hilarious, "Be sober;" to the sorrowful, "Be comforted." They must be led to the sources of comfort, to the waters whose voice and murmur are laden with consolation. It is comfort to feel our spirit held in hands whose very touch heals. Let me ask you, then, to think how God is present to the soul in sorrow, and how sorrow opens the soul to Him. He is always around us, but we do not always feel Him around. Yet without Him, consciously enjoyed, life is without its chief good. The child in glad buoyant health is happy simply because it lives, is merry in the sunshine, joyful in the rain, knows no care, and never dreams that it may cause care to sit in the father's heart, or make a mother anxious in her very joy. But let sickness come to the child, and what ease comes to the hot brow from the touch of love's cool and gentle hand, and what a comfort, even in the feverish sleep that gives no rest, comes from the sense of a mother's presence and sweet care!

The sickness that made the child dearer to the home and the home to the child, was the moment of a discovery which was twice blessed, for the revelation of a guardian and guarded love. So sorrow makes us feel the gracious hand of God leading us towards His own eternity and bringing us into the very sanctuary of His own presence. And how can the man who stands there be other than comforted, or be less than blessed?

II.

But the beatitude cannot be understood alone. If we would see what it means, we must read it through the Saviour's experience. To say that suffering is common, that it is inevitable, that we cannot escape it, has in it no comfort—nay, it rather bids us be consoled at the expense of our faith in the goodness of God. A patient sufferer who had borne pain and loss with the quiet resignation of our people once told me, "Ah! well, we cannot always get our lot to our mind, but we can always bring our mind to our lot." But this was not so much Christian resignation as a sort of heathen submission, though a very pious and beautiful heathenism. But we may get higher consolation than this if we ask of Christ Himself, who was the very Man of sorrows, whether and in what way His own life illustrated His own beatitude. As the astronomer must stand in thought in the sun before he can understand the mechanism of the solar system or perceive its harmonies, so the Christian must stand within and look out from the mind of Christ if he would know the meaning of sorrow in the order of this world.

1. Now, this point of view is supplied by our second

text, which shows us why the very Son of God suffered. The middle of it is a long parenthesis, which may, for our present purpose, be left out; what remains is: "In the days of His flesh, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." "The days of His flesh" defines at once the specific time meant and nature possessed—while He lived as a man upon earth. "Though He were a Son" defines His relation to God. The relation was filial. He was a Son. Had a path of immunity and privilege been possible, it must have been found for Him. But no, there was no such path. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." When obedience was the designed and desired end, suffering was even to Him a moral necessity.

Here, then, is the typical man—"holy, harmless, undefiled;" the Son approved of the Father, able to learn obedience in no way but through suffering. His humanity was throughout like ours; His sufferings, so far as they are intelligible, such as man can and may suffer. With His mysterious, unrevealed, superhuman agonies—agonies that lie not on the side next the human, but the side next the divine—we have here no concern. We think only of His sufferings as a man, as a Son learning obedience. Nor are these conceived to be in any appreciable sense *physical.* Certainly as a man with a sensitive organism, with senses and nerves of trembling delicacy, He must have been strangely susceptible of physical pain, shrinking from it as the sensitive plant shrinks from the rude touch of the curious sight-seer; but it in no distinctive degree whatever entered into His sufferings. Often, indeed, men speak of the bloody sweat, the lips parched with thirst, the brow crowned with thorns, the pierced hands, the wounded side,

as if these constituted Christ's real and deepest sufferings; but these in truth relieved rather than manifested His intenser agony, for all expression is relief. Sorrow of spirit created physical pain, the physical pain did not create the spiritual sorrow. His cry in the supreme moment of His Passion was not "My head!" or "My breast!" but "My *soul* is exceeding sorrowful!" The scourging and the crucifixion were comparatively small things—many on rack or gibbet have endured more. The seat and the depth of His agony were seen only when the touch of a Roman spear showed that He had died, not of what His body, but of what His spirit, had endured—of a broken heart!

And how was it that by means of these sufferings Christ "learned obedience"? Obedience may be either active or passive. Active obedience is performance of duty, realization in action and character of the divine will. Passive obedience is resignation, entire acquiescence in the will of God. In regard to both suffering has a kindred function.

(*a*) Active obedience is learned through suffering. Were all our duties agreeable, then obedience would be only a form of indulgence or self-will. A right done from pleasure or inclination, is done as pleasant, not as right. If the agreeable and the obligatory were the same, then the most intensely selfish man would be the most obedient, the most scrupulous in his fidelity to duty. But here suffering, in one form or another, appears to separate real from seeming obedience. Inclination and conscience, the agreeable and the right, the pleasant and the dutiful, may, and in some cases must, point in exactly contrary directions; and so the man is forced to choose between

self and law. Obedience, therefore, can be ascertained to exist only through suffering; and as every indulgence enervates the will, while every right choice in the face of pain strengthens it, only by the same means can obedience be perfected. Only when suffering reaches the highest possible point, the point where it quenches life, can the man be said to be tried to the uttermost, and obedience then rendered is perfect, because rendered at the sacrifice of self. Law is held dearer than life,—duty better than being.

So Christ's sufferings were at once the means and measure of His obedience. The moment that He became conscious of a duality of powers seeking to rule within Him, He suffered; and the moment He chose the higher, He obeyed. The solitary glimpse we have into His boyhood shows the two forces at work. The "Father's business" demanded the stay at Jerusalem, the mother's will the homeward journey; but the first, doubtless at much pain of heart, was followed. The Temptation, a scene of continuous suffering, was a series of successive lessons in obedience. Had He ceased to do the Father's will, His sufferings from the world would also have ceased. Had He never suffered, His obedience would never have been known. His sorrows increased with every hour He lived; but as they rose, so did His obedience. The vanquishing point was never reached. The sufferings laid siege to the seat of life: He must die or surrender His sinlessness, and He gave the life, but held the obedience. Himself He could sacrifice—not duty, not law, not love. So didst Thou go, O blessed One! right through the agony of the garden, the mockery of the judgment-hall, the burden of the cross, the anguish of the crucifixion, till in Thy death

Thy obedience triumphed, and sin fell back defeated and undone!

(*b*) But passive obedience, like active, is "learned" through suffering. If man gets always and only what he desires, then it can never be known whether he judges himself or God the more fit ruler of the world. It is only when the wish of man and the will of God come into collision that it can be seen whether the man worships his own will, or accepts the divine. Without Gethsemane we should never have had the prayer, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And so without suffering passive obedience were impossible. It is in its highest form the culmination of active. When the will sees that either obedience or life must be sacrificed, and, while loving life, it yet refuses to purchase it at the expense of duty, then, indeed, has obedience been perfected, self utterly annihilated, and God made all in all.

Of the passive obedience of Jesus I need not speak. Let Gethsemane speak for us. There He who did the Father's will achieved the final act of self-abnegation. That garden is to us the world's holy of holies, and into it our profane feet may not further enter.

2. Let us now consider the Christian's sufferings in the light of Christ's. Of course those that are merely physical do not fall to be considered here. They are by no means distinctive of the man or the Christian. Physical suffering in man's case derives all its significance from the mental experience which attends it. Disease is painful, not because of the pain, but because it injures and may destroy life. It is death behind the disease that lends to it its terror. And the thought of death begets many other thoughts. What lies beyond? Do we live there?

What states are after death? Are the dead conscious? Do they feel and think? And these mental sufferings, rising out of our physical, are distinctive of man. Had man as little mind as the brute, he would suffer as little. The savage holds life cheap, despises alike pain and death. The sage shrinks from pain, and thinks to a morbid extent about the sleep which rounds our little life. Body is the occasion, mind the seat of suffering, and it is in every case proportioned to the quantity and quality of mind possessed.

In man's case as in Christ's, suffering is so far a necessity. The man of deepest thought and highest character will suffer most. He who sees deepest will find most to sadden. He who lives most purely will feel most the passion of living. The further a man sinks beneath the level of his day, the less will he feel the world and himself out of joint. The higher he rises above it, the more will he feel the discord, and in proportion as he suffers he will, like Christ, only the more "learn obedience."

(*a*) We learn active obedience by suffering. Our lives tend to monotonous uniformity—to move with facile feet round the smooth circle of habit, until action becomes mechanical, and custom law. Each day is so like the other—our duties have so much of sameness—that action becomes instinctive after a sort, and routine rather than principle rules us. And were there no counteractive power at work, the idea of duty might be forgotten, and life be only the mechanical repetition of things done before. But sorrow comes, breaks the monotony, rouses all that was latent in the man, shakes him out of his mechanical uniformity of experience and thought, and sets the soul and God, conscience and duty, face to face with each other.

Suffering ever introduces man to duty, the stern daughter of God, compels choice between inclination and obligation, and brings the terrible struggle which "drowns the bases of our life in tears." And then comes obedience. Our highest thoughts, our noblest movements, have issued from suffering souls. Agony wrung the Reformation from Luther. When David's soul was smitten sorest, his harp was sweetest. Jacob never lost his cunning till he had buried Rachel, and found his heart made soft through sorrow. Abraham's faith reached its triumphant point only in the great sorrow of a great sacrifice. And ah! brethren, do not our lives so teach us? Only at our first great soul's sorrow did the heavens open to us, and in the visions of the night God's angels ascend and descend on the ladder of glory. Only when some great peril seemed to bar our life's way did we rest at Peniel, see the face of God, and through wrestling with Him become strong. Then, indeed, do we feel like—

> "Iron dug from central gloom,
> And heated hot with burning fears,
> And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
> And battered with the shocks of doom
> To shape and use."

(*b*) So, too, is passive obedience learned. The soul that has never suffered has never known resignation. He who has never sorrowed has never known the grand truth that there is in the universe a will higher and wiser than his own, caring for him, being at all the trouble to chastise him, sending the thing he likes least, but needs most. A man might almost wish to be smitten, if only to have his wounds bound up by a hand so gentle and divine as Christ's. And with resignation true wisdom comes. Death no longer seems cruel or untimely. God has no green grain in his

garners. He cuts it down at the ripest, as ripe as it ever can be, and though man may say, "Oh, had it only been left a little longer the ear had been fuller, the corn yellower, and fitter for the sickle;" yet the spirit resigned believes God knows best, and while He spares the green, takes the corn in the ripest condition it can ever reach. So trouble is borne—it may be the means of ripening. Death is welcome—it comes at the fittest season.

The suffering which teaches active obedience is of one kind: that which teaches passive, of another. The first arises from the conflict of our personality, our intellect, conscience, and will, with the anomalies of time and the problems of eternity; the second from the afflictions sent by God. And the two develop very different qualities. The first kind of suffering educes the manlier virtues,—those needed in a world of mingled good and evil, where every man must be a warrior, either under the banner of the Cross or the crescent of the false prophet. The second educes the more spiritual virtues,—those needed by a spirit about to leave earth and enter eternity, who requires to be assimilated in thought and feeling to the everlasting Father and His Son. And the first type of obedience suits a sound mind in a sound body, but the second a weakening body and a strengthening spirit. And as the diverse processes go on, body and soul seem to get a little estranged. The body, as its end nears, grows helpless, fretful—needs to be tended and nursed all the more delicately that its season of use is nearly done. But the soul becomes less dependent on man, more absorbed in God,—less concerned about human thought, more concerned about the divine. So our gracious Father slopes the brink, and lets us glide gently into great eternity.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." And what comfort can equal this, that out of our sufferings have come the obedience that makes the soul beautiful before God, and gives it the last transcendent bliss of awakening in His likeness?

WATCHFULNESS.

WATCHFULNESS.

A Sermon to Young Men.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."—1 Cor. xvi. 13.

There is a connection intimate and indeed indissoluble between a man's character and his view of life. He conceives life as he lives it; his criticism of it is only a disguised criticism of himself. What he judges is what he is, the concrete thing he embodies; not the abstract thing called life, or even what is being attempted and achieved around him. As he himself is in moral quality and aim, in spiritual faculty and endeavour, such will life seem to him to be. The feeble and the worthless may fitly enough ask, Is life worth living? The brave and the good who live worthily have no need to ask the question, for they are without the experiences that raise it or even make it intelligible when raised. Life can only be worth living provided it be worthily lived.

The pessimist's question, then, ought not to be abstract but concrete, concerned not with life but the persons who live it. The faded epicure, who has sought mirth in wine, and joy in vice, preaches in his exhausted old age the sermon whose monotonous refrain is, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" And to the vain what else than vanity could

life be? But the ripened saint whose life has been one long aspiration after God sings, like the fabled swan, his sweetest song in death. The man of genius who has been the victim of his own bad passions mourns, as he suffers sore heartache after a life ill spent, that "the flowers and fruits of love are gone," while "the worm, the canker, and the grief are his alone;" or he plaintively reflects that

> ". . . pleasures are like poppies spread :
> You seize the flower—its bloom is shed ;
> Or like the snow-flake on the river,
> One moment white, then gone for ever."

But the man of genius who is also a man of God can say as he draws nigh the end, whether the end be amid the reverence and the riches and the honours of man, or amid the chills of a Roman dungeon, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, . . . henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

The man, therefore, and the man's view of life agree. Life is to him as he is to it. Bad thinking comes out of bad being. The pessimism of an age is but the product of a consciousness which conscience has not been allowed to rule. Where conscience is sane and sound, there life will be judged excellent, and in its very failure still have promise. But sin produces despair, and begets the feeling that life has evils we cannot remedy; while holiness begets the courage that comes of the faith that the wrongs of time can still be righted by the grace of God working through the obedience and benevolence of men. The man who has lived in vice sees no good he can do, feels no call to do any good, and knows that, if any good is to be done, he is not the man to do it, and so he sums up his theory of being in the words of miserable mirth, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow

we die." But the brave and courageous and saintly man can say to all who hear him, whether in the morning or on the eve of the battle, or in the very thick of the fight, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

I.

The man who here exhorts us well illustrates the relation between character and the view of life. He had known hardness and had patiently endured it. Life had not been to him soft and pleasant, a stream of delicious sweetnesses or desires felt only to be gratified, but had been full of trouble and change—a succession of shocks to faith and disappointments to hope. Think of him as he came up to Jerusalem, a young man of buoyant faith and large hopefulness and strong convictions. He does not so much hold them as they hold him. You can measure the strength of convictions by two things. First, their power of governing a man, or the degree of control they exercise over mind and conduct; and next, the pain and suffering it costs him to change them, if the moment ever comes when change he must. It is then seen whether they have so penetrated his soul that it is by the change of convictions changed into another soul.

A brilliant writer of our own age, for awhile the supreme genius in fiction, whose works men love to read for their ethical purpose and their ethical spirit, had, as seen from the outside, a life even more romantic than any romance or tale she had written. Nay, there were those who read deeper meaning into her words because of the real life they imagined to be half revealed and half concealed in her fictions. She was gifted with wonderful insight

into some phases of the religious mind; was able to see the pathos and the poetry even in the prosaic commonplace of middle-class respectability, the humour in the speech and the tragedy in the life of the squalid and inarticulate peasant, the sordid struggle and the broken ideals and the sad and tender yet gracious memories of the passion common to our kind that may live under the most decorous clerical garb, and within the secluded vicarage or rectory; and we all used to feel that if the real corresponded to the imaginative life, it could not but be rich, not only in graces and humours, but in intensity, in passion, in the tragic experiences that are to the soul what the earthquake is to nature and revolution to a people. But so far as we have been allowed a glimpse into the secret history of her soul, what do we find? That in early life she was pietistic, a person much concerned about the souls of other people, certain that they must believe as she did or they would inevitably perish, and given to expressing this faith of hers both in letters and in speech. But suddenly a mind as strong as her own presented difficulties which she could neither surmount nor see through, and as a result, in the briefest time she glides out of the faith she seemed to hold so strongly and so earnestly, as easily and as softly as if she had been a ship obeying wind and tide, and her faith a sea that opened softly before and closed noiselessly behind. In later life she had no love for that older faith. It was to her a form of other-worldliness, on which she could pour caustic literary scorn, though when her fiction required it she had enough knowledge and sympathetic imagination to use it, without any sign of all it had once been for herself as a possession, and now might have been as a memory. It was simply an instrument that could be so used as to

make a character beautiful and good, or quaint and interesting, or qualified to act in a dramatic situation or plot; but the character was never made by his truth or nobleness to make the faith seem credible or true. Faith used to make characters suitable for fiction is a very different thing from characters in fiction being made to illustrate faith.

But let us look at the case of a man who had ever been real in the faith he held, and in all that concerned both the holding and the changing of it. This reality is of the essence of the man, and so of his attitude to faith. Paul, born a Jew, becomes a Christian. He changes his old faith for a new faith; yet the change of a thing so grave is not an easy change. It leaves scars upon his soul so deep that they are never healed over. His whole life is coloured, influenced, determined, by those early convictions and the conflicts and struggle of the change. Trouble comes to him from every side. The men he had left hate him, for he was their lost leader, though he had not left them for honour, or for a ribbon, or to have a button to stick in his coat. On the contrary, because of it he had to endure shame and sorrow, to meet and bear utmost persecution at their and other hands. Yet while they hated, he did not, like the apostate, repay hatred with deeper hate, but he loved, so loved that he was ready to give himself unto death, nay, to bear what was to him loss of highest beatitude and experience of last misery, to be accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. And after making his great renunciation and facing all the miseries it involved, how was he received by the men whose faith he had embraced? Suspicion waited on him, office ignored and doubted him, recognition was denied him, and

neglect was the kindliest attitude assumed. But at last discovery came with Barnabas, and the way to his great work was opened up. Yet even then all was not comfort and confidence. His faith was too large for the men in office; their resistance ceased to be passive, and became active. He had to withstand Peter to the face; and even Barnabas, the man he trusted, his true yokefellow, fell away and deserted him in his hour of trial. More, the Churches that he had planted, the men that he converted, that ought to have loved him as a father, that he loved as children, allowed themselves to be led away from the larger faith, and men began to stand up, as they did at Corinth, and say, "I am of Paul," or "I of Apollos," or "I of Cephas," or "I of Christ." But though hate from those he left followed him, and suspicion from those he joined surrounded him, and desertion from those he converted awaited him, yet he never forgot his faith or left unfulfilled his duty. And so when he came to give from his own experience his last lesson to the men he loved, even though they had allowed themselves to be so divided and estranged from him, what more fitting lesson could it be than a lesson of strength and of steadfastness, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong"?

II.

All the duties here enforced are important and all are related. First, there is watchfulness—the men are to be vigilant, like sentinels on duty. Secondly, they are to "stand fast in the faith." They watch that they may stand fast and keep the faith. Thirdly, the men who so watch and stand are to "quit themselves like men." Fourthly, as

men who have bound these three together and realized them in one character they are to "be strong."

1. "Watch." Now, the duty of watchfulness implies its need, and the need of watchfulness springs from the manifoldness as well as the subtlety of temptation. Temptation is made possible by what is in a man, and it is made real by what is about a man. The susceptibilities to it live within him; the incitements, provocations, inducements, live around him, as it were in the very air he breathes. It is the adaptation of the outer to the inner, and the openness or sensibility of the inner to the outer, that constitutes the strength of temptation and creates the need of watchfulness. The sentinel eye must be at once outward and inward, prospective and introspective, jealous lest the inner and the outer enemy secretly meet, suddenly agree, and immediately seize and defile the citadel of the soul. The inner conditions that make it possible and the outer forms that make it actual may be reduced to three classes or kinds—social, moral, and intellectual. As regards each of these I shall speak to you as if you were honest, virtuous men. You have escaped the lower and the more brutal vices; the temptations of the passions, the animal appetites, the baser and more bestial sins, lie, I hope, outside the range of your experience, and against these you need not be warned. But there are subtler dangers assailing you on the higher and better side of your manhood, though only that they may develop and exercise the lower. And it is against some of these that Christian men to-day, like the Christian men at Corinth in our first century, need to be on their guard.

First, the social. You can understand the dangers of the then Corinthian society. It loved vice, doubted goodness, disbelieved in virtue; and where these things are,

nobleness and purity cannot be. It was tolerant of conventional sins, but fierce against unconventional excellence. It was full of racial hatreds, commercial greed, the passion for pastimes that inclined to evil. To live in this society and be pure was a hard thing, but a far harder was to prevent it so soaking into the very matter of the man as to quench his manhood. Hence the apostle said, "Watch."

Now, the need for watchfulness has not ceased. I do not, indeed, mean for a moment to adopt a pessimistic tone. Society with us is better than society once was, though far from as good as it ought to be. Public life is purer and its standard higher. Last century many a borough in England had its price; and a man bought a borough that he might go and sell himself. Where public life is impure at the source, it cannot be pure in the stream or down in the river. Purity must be at the fountain-head if there is to be purity throughout. And surely the measure of honour and integrity we have in our statesmen and judges, and in those who represent the making and administration of our laws, ought to be a reason for gratitude, though not for contentment. We can never in the things moral that concern the common weal reach the point where we can sit still and say, "Let us rest and be thankful." The ancient faith, which was the faith of our fathers, said, The saint governs the earth; the man who is not saintly is not capable of making, is not capable of administering, law. For such offices vice ought to disqualify as well as crime. Men who are guilty of uncleannesses ought to be as severely judged as men guilty of criminal transgressions. There may be less evil and less mischief to the state in the flagrant offender than in the man who uses great wealth or high place as a cloak of lasciviousness. And we shall never see, and ought never

to see, England truly honoured and justly proud until we act as if private vices were public injuries and a national reproach. We must also confess that our commerce has much of its ancient character of honour. The English merchant has a word as good as his bond. But while the value of trust is great, the value of the character that can be trusted is still greater. A land where men deceive and are cunning in deceit is a land hastening to decay. Here, then, is the personal lesson: private purity, integrity, honour, is the basis of public. You cannot command, but you can influence society, and the one form of potent and noble influence is the living man, virtue incorporated and breathing the breath of life.

But while we have much cause for gratitude in respect of the progress we have made, we have greater cause for watchfulness in things that remain. Our society is sadly destitute of true economy. Economy is not parsimony, but stands distinguished from it thus: Parsimony wastes by holding and hoarding what needs to be scattered in order to be multiplied and made fruitful; but economy means three things organized into a living and efficient unity—first, labour wisely directed and applied; secondly, the power of reaping and gathering in its abundant fruits; thirdly, the skill and the will to make of these fruits the most equal and ample distribution. Economy, true public and political economy, will thus secure that wealth shall be national weal; the good not simply of the one, but of the many; not simply of the few, but of the whole. The enormous wealth of families does not mean the common wealth of the land. A land's wealth is not to be measured by the few rich or the many well-to-do, but by the area of its distribution, the number of men that fairly participate

in it. Grave dangers may grow from accumulation in the hands of the few, without adequate distribution into the homes of the many. For where the extremes of poverty and of wealth meet, there you have the contact of the most explosive forces. In a city like London, with East divided from West by an impassable gulf, separated by a distance vaster than divides the Orient from the Occident, you have one of those deep divisions of class that are, by closer proximity of place, more dangerous to society and the state than even the enormities and desolations of civil war. A contented and a united can alone be a stable and a happy people; yet where there are evils still to remedy, discontent is better than the sodden and hopeless stupor which the unforeseeing call contentment. Here, too, the personal lesson is obvious. Do not let the ignoble ideals of mere financial success, the mean ambitions of the millionaire, be yours. Money is excellent in its own place, but its place is not to be the main motive or great end of life. Despise the respect, scorn the luxuries, money can buy. If you are in business, do not cease to be a man; and use your very commerce to honour the Church and serve the State.

Our wealth lies not in our money, but in our men. We ought to be more jealous of the enemies we breed in our bosom than of those who may thunder at our gates. Yet we spend ten times more on our futile instruments of war than on the education and the forming of our people. And we forget where the real strength of a state lies. Our first and our last line of defence is not in our arsenals, not in our armies, not in our navy, but in our men. Not that I would despise and undervalue even the most mechanical and official forms of defence, but I would rather simply insist that beneath and behind them must stand the people.

They, and not the statesmen, make the state; they, and not our generals or our admirals, can save or lose the state. Where they are happy and virtuous and strong, the state can neither decay nor be conquered. And here, let me say, is the supreme function of the pulpit and the preacher. We have been accustomed to have it said that men may be divided into producers and consumers, the producer being the man that makes our wealth, and the consumer often the sort of parasite that fattens on it. But we need to enlarge our notion of producers. There is something higher than the making of calculable and distributable wealth; there is the making of men. And to make men you need the faith that forms them, the truth that changes them, the grace that renews them. Here, indeed, is our supremest social need—the making of new men. Make them and they will find new methods for creating new wealth and for distributing the wealth created. And here is my reason for speaking to you; it is men we need, and you are among the needed men. But to be men you must hear the voice of God, submit yourselves to His will; make His truth your law, and learn to bring on earth the kingdom of heaven.

The second source is the moral. Now, this distinction may seem somewhat unreal—as, indeed, it may easily become. Social evils are moral evils, dangerous alike to society and the individual. The conscience of society, save where its own hard conventions are outraged, is a much easier thing than the personal conscience; and the tendency, where society is a strong and as it were organized force, is for the collective conscience to supersede the personal. For just consider how mischievous it would be were conventional standards applied to moral things. Were

men to judge their own acts and conduct by those standards which the legal guardians of morality often think adequate for the vindication of the common conscience, the result would be calamitous. Here is a banker fraudulent, who has deprived his many victims of thousands of pounds, not in one sudden and unpremeditated act as of momentary insanity, but by a series of carefully calculated acts, extending over almost a whole generation, which have enabled him to live in comfort and outward dignity on the hard-won savings of the working man and the painfully garnered heritage of the widow and the orphan. And then, when discovery and detection have come, his punishment has been little more than a brief period of restful seclusion, tempered by a severe and judicial rebuke. But some meanly endowed lad, surprised in a moment of temptation or need into some miserable theft, is stamped for life with crime, and, when most susceptible of evil or good, made the associate of the criminals who by their too real and too terrible corporate being neither know nor allow any repentance. Or here is the seducer fresh from his guilt, with none of its shame upon his face, but with all its dishonour and its degradation in his soul, possessed with the disbelief in chastity which the sedulous cultivation of vice ever begets; yet, with the love of the eligible which is more willing than charity to cover a multitude of sins, the father tolerates him and the mother smiles upon him, nay, they receive him into the home, judging him fit to woo, to win, and to wed the daughter. But his victim, forsaken and disowned, despised and unpitied, is, by those who had no blame for him who had been the victor over her weakness, cast out as an unclean thing. These are quoted in order to warn us that our moral judgments ought to be

according to conscience, and not according to social conventions. Unreal standards are those that have no relation or proportion to the offence, and our social conventions are, at the very point where they ought to be most true and fearless, unreal standards. We ought to watch with a most godly jealousy lest the blind judgments of a society which has conventions but no conscience, take the place of the clear and imperious judgments of a conscience which has no conventions. The person is ever greater than the society he moves in; and the only things that have social are those that have most moral worth, integrity, purity, truth.

Thirdly, there are the intellectual temptations and dangers. These are many, and the point where they are acutest is our youthful manhood, when the pleasures that come from the exercise of the intellect are most keen. We often hear it said that our intellectual temptations and dangers are due to increased knowledge, our vaster and more varied mental activity. But they rise more from the range of our ignorance, and from the intense frivolity of our intellectual life. This frivolity is, indeed, immense. We so amuse ourselves with trivial interests, so love our clubs and coteries, so enjoy the coarse incense of our mutual admiration societies. Our literature is too ephemeral; our reading, too much the recreation of not simply the idle but the vacant hour. Men to be read must be brilliant. Newspapers to have power must be spiced. People must be tempted to read; and to tempt them to reading, sharp, aphoristic, satiric, cruel, witty things must be written. And the result too often is the intellectual frivolity, the lightness of head and of mind which is equal to nothing but airy nothings of phrase and talk. But the intellect was made for

nobler things, to seek knowledge with grave eye and concentrated thought, to study, to learn, to desire to find the truth, to inquire into the works and the ways of God. No; we ought to feel that when we touch truth, we touch the very eye of God, we touch the reason which is as it were the divine in man. As Milton said, "As well kill a man as kill a book." If a book be killed, what does it mean but that the truth is strangled? And could there be a graver disaster than that we should by sheer frivolity lose the desire to seek and the power to know God? The mind may grow so shallow that it cannot reflect the infinite heaven, or so ruffled in its shallowness by every passing breeze that it breaks the beauty of the moon and stars that were seeking a mirror in its breast. Truth is what we men need for living, for dying; it brings us face to face with our own being; it sets us in the heart of eternity, makes us feel the infinite heaven above and the infinite space around, and bids us in our loneliness, amid the immensities, leave our soul in the hand of God, that we may be lonely no more. That we may not lose the trueness in us that seeks the truth without and above, let us steadfastly "watch!"

But why must those dangers, social, moral, intellectual, be guarded against? What is a man? When he carries himself through the years of his time on earth, what is it that he carries? Did you ever cross the mighty ocean on board a steamship that travels statelily, and bears its hundreds in comfort and in joy? Then you will well remember the bright and sunny days on the broad bosom of the Atlantic in the great steamship, when round the deck, clustered in the shadow to escape the searching yet grateful sunshine, the people sit. Gossip goes on there; now light talk, now

grave, now gay, now sad, giving relief to the spirit just as the spirit wills. There men and women sit, with the last new novel, breathing health and whiling away the long and pleasant day, feeling the gracious atmosphere through which floats the radiant sunshine. While on the deck below all is lightness of heart and mind and feeling, there walks on the bridge above, now alone, now with a faithful lieutenant, watching in the very sunshine for sign of coming storm, the man who bears in his spirit that stately ship, these hundreds of lives, all the wealth she carries in her hold. His burden is such that he must watch between land and land; light must he sleep, clear must be his eye, concentrated his spirit and his thought. And think you ever man went to sea, ever sailor guided across the ocean a bark half so precious as you carry, a vessel bearing wealth equal to the wealth you bear—a spirit launched by the hand of God, floating on the sea of time to the great haven of eternity? What are you? And how can you safely fare over this temptation-tossed sea unless you, with a vigilance proportioned to the wealth you bear, ceaselessly "watch"?

2. "Stand fast in the faith." Let us observe the relation between the two duties. The earlier must be that the later may be; the later will be if the earlier is. Steadfastness is impossible without watchfulness; watchfulness is incomplete without steadfastness. What men are to watch are the causes or tendencies that estrange from faith; what they are to stand fast in is the faith these causes or tendencies threaten. In the duty of watchfulness the springs and sources of movement are guarded; in the duty of steadfastness the watching has its perfect work. The sources of temptation are the dangers of the faith.

Reversing the order before followed, I would say, intellectual activity is a great help to steadfastness in belief, but intellectual frivolity a grave danger. I would not make light of the difficulties that perplex the serious mind; what troubles it touches us all. To be forced to feel that the beliefs witnessed to by the Christian Church and accepted by the holy and the good cannot be believed, must ever be a heavy trial to the sober and grave mind. For if it doubts, it is not from inclination, but against it; not by preference, but from sheer conviction; and he is no friend to truth who does not respect the doubt of such a mind. But the number who belong to this class is never large. The longer we live, and the more we know of the intellectual tendencies that create conventional disbelief, the more we discover that fashion, temper, want of thought, and openness to superficial influences, are more potent than grave and serious reason. Every age has its own peculiar tendencies to negation, and in our own day we may say that mental meddlesomeness, want of thought and plenitude of frivolous speech about the most awful themes, are more fruitful causes of doubt, if doubt we may call it, than the questions of the critics, or the problems of philosophy and the schools. Faith has everything to gain from standing face to face with the serious reason. There is no solvent of belief like light-mindedness attempting to decide issues which only the sober-minded can even understand. We are false to our own minds if we play with things too sacred and too awful to be played with. We owe it to the memories which cluster round the faith, to the lives that have been spent in its service, to the work that it has done in the past, to the hopes it can create for the future, to deal gravely with its problems, and we may be sure that to the mind that

devoutly questions light will arise in the darkness, if on it the darkness descends.

Then as to the next source of temptation, I would say it is not the graver immoralities that threaten faith. Indeed, hardly any man is estranged from belief by serious vice; it may come at the end of the process and complete the estrangement, but the real sources are the minor immoralities, the smaller vices, the things that rather lean to evil than are actual evils. If a man is not scrupulous in truthfulness, if he encourages latitude of reference and allusion, if he strains a phrase to make a point, if he conceals a truth to escape inconvenience, if he stains a chivalrous act to raise a smile, if he stoops to pruriency to be amusing, be sure that the moral process which disintegrates faith has begun. The fine enamel of the soul, which is love of the truth, is being eaten away. But if you guard against the minor vices you will never be guilty of the major, or be tempted to the last feat of the fool, to make a mock of the sin that always in the end achieves so terrible a triumph over the mocker.

But the dangers to faith from the social sources of temptation are a mightier multitude. We are becoming too collective. We need a return to the old strong individualism. If we let any society, whether it be the fashionable thing that bears by pre-eminence this name, or the small circle in which we live and move and feel that we have an appreciated being, gain such a possession over us that the only approval of our conscience is its smile, and our only remorse its frown, then we are not far from loosing hold of God and all the realities His name denotes. The man who does not cultivate solitude can never enjoy society, and he whose social are never subjected to the

criticism of his solitary hours, will cease to be a man governed from above, and become a mere thing, it may be of art, fashioned from around and below.

But what is this faith we are to watch that we may stand fast in? It means our openness of soul to that eternal God who is our Father, yet our King; it means daily fellowship with that ever-living Christ who is our Brother, yet our Priest; it means a home within the soul to that eternal Spirit who is our Comforter, yet our Guide. Faith is the hold of the spirit upon those eternal verities of God, which hold the spirit in time as if it were within eternity. Let us see that we are not robbed of faith by any fashion that promises momentary pleasure, by any light-heartedness or light-headedness that enjoys a giddy moment but cannot bear a grave retrospection. The faith we have God gave to us. Let us be worthy alike of the Giver and the gift.

3. "Quit you like men." What is it to be a man? It is to bear God's image, and to be like the image we bear. To be a man is to be chivalrous in thought, pure in feeling, honourable in conduct, true in speech. A man is marked by certain great ignorances; he can dare to be ignorant of the meaner, the more prurient and vicious things of life. In his presence the unclean tale will die on the unchaste tongue; round him will be an atmosphere through which the unclean jest will refuse to travel; he will shut up the unclean book; he will courageously be ignorant, that he may be innocent of vice. There is a cant of religion, but there is a commoner and meaner cant of irreligion and of impurity. He who is a man thinks of every woman through his mother or through his sister, and holds the thought that would tarnish any, an insult to those he most reveres and loves. If you stand fast in the faith you will

embody that faith in spiritual and moral manhood, knowing this, that the man who keeps his own spirit pure, is the man most approved of the Father.

4. And if these duties are fulfilled by you, then within you the last duty will be realized—as it were the completion and crown and reward of all the others. They who "watch" and "stand fast in the faith," "quit themselves like men." And such men are strong, but their strength is the strength of gentleness; it is the strength of chastity, of integrity, and truth; it is the strength that He embodied who was meek and lowly in heart, but who also was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners. Their life shall be as the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

PART III.

PULPIT DISCUSSIONS.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL OF RELIGION.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL OF RELIGION.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—JAMES i. 27.

JAMES is rich in the practical wisdom the Hebrew loved, the wisdom whose natural speech is the proverb, whose organ is a sort of transcendent common-sense. He is the pre-eminent apostle of Christian duty in its homeliest aspects and most everyday acts and functions. The men who made up his Church, which was indeed his world, were better in creed than in conduct, and what he said were the things they most needed to hear. Men who are careful of the major often neglect the minor moralities of life, and hardly know they do it. There are many who think that, provided they speak the truth, it does not much matter how or for what purpose they speak it—nay, that it is all the better and more useful if it be so spoken as to wound a neighbour or serve a selfish end. They forget what one of the supremest moralists said: "Speak the truth in love." Not otherwise, indeed, will the truth consent to be spoken. Where it is spoken in hate it ceases to be true, becomes false as the spirit that speaks it. The man who

uses the truth that he may hurt or wrong a brother man, changes it into a lie. What is used for a devil's purpose becomes a devil's tool. What a man receives from God must be employed for ends God approves, and in ways He honours, that it may do the work of God in the man and through him. Inconsistencies of this order James had an eye quick to see, a tongue sharp to reprove. To him the worst heresy was a life which contradicted the faith, making profession of the right while leaving practice in the wrong. Like John, he held that the best thing for a man was not to *say*, but to *do* the truth, to love God by loving his brother. Without this there could not be the truth of nature that most surely secured truth of speech. God is love; and so only he who dwelt in love could truly do and truly speak the truth of God. Other men might seem to be religious, but religious those alone were who, "swift to hear, slow to speak," lived as in the sight of God, benevolent, beneficent, blameless in the world.

I.

In this twenty-seventh verse James supplies us with what is not so much a definition as a description of "pure and undefiled religion." It concludes a paragraph, and to understand the verse we must follow the argument that leads up to it. The paragraph begins at ver. 19, "Ye know this, my beloved brethren." Hitherto he had been concerned with "first principles," known, held, approved in common; now he was coming to a more delicate matter, the practical issues and duties they involved. "But let every man be swift to hear." Of course the thing to be heard is "the word of truth" (ver. 18); as regards any other word the

command had been, "Be slow to hear." Evil speech is bad, evil hearing is no better. The tongue of malice would soon be silent were all ears shut to it. It is the demand for frivolous or malicious gossip that creates the supply. False reports unheard would die in the very moment of birth. But to be "swift to hear" "the word of truth" is to be apt to learn, and the willing learner is the willing worker, the best hearer the most efficient doer of the truth. "Slow to speak." Speech is the glory of man, and so easily becomes his shame. Weighed words are words at once weighted and winged with thought; hasty words are thoughtless, mischievous in the degree that they are void of mind and truth. Were speech slower it would be stiller but mightier, and it is in quietness that the spiritual forces of the universe most love to do their creative and ameliorative work. It is "the fool who is full of words," whose "lips will swallow up himself."[1] "Slow to wrath." Passion causes swift speech. It is always foolish in its talk. An angry sage is no wiser than a passionate fool, differs from him only in the shame he feels at the recollection of the words he had spoken in his rage. So James bids men be "slow to wrath," certain that where passion is subdued speech will be measured. And he adds in his emphatic way a reason against wrath: it "worketh not the righteousness of God." Underneath this lies a fine principle—what serves God must be God-like. There can be no bad means to good ends; bad means make the ends bad. If man is to further the purposes of the righteous God, it must be by righteousness. That, as James knew right well, was a much-needed principle in those days of change. The bigotry of the old faith, and the enthusiasm of the new, did not easily

[1] Eccles. x. 12, 14.

brook difference; so said he, Remember, "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

But how was this wisdom of speech, this rectitude of spirit and of way, to be obtained? There were two conditions, a negative and a positive. The negative was, "Lay aside all filthiness and pre-eminence of malice." It is the evil nature that does the evil thing; the last sin is not an act of the will, but a state of the spirit. Right living must begin in rectified being, and it in renunciation, surrender of the evil in us, that evil may cease to work by us. The positive condition was, "Receive with meekness the implanted word." That word is creative, generative, begets a new life which supplants and expels the old. The absence of vice were poor virtue, the renunciation of evil but an illusory holiness. Through the word of God the life of God enters a man; where it germinates He regenerates, the piece of leaven leavening the whole lump. But that the word may do its work it must be heard; the life it creates must be expressed in action, embodied in conduct. Word and action are correlated spiritual forces; the truth that comes to us by hearing is transformed into being, and produces higher thought and nobler living. Without this correlation the spiritual force is dissipated, fails of its destined good. Such failure James thought possible; the society he knew was full, as it were, of abortive efforts at change. Many had heard the word, believed it in a way, yet remained as before; many others had heard and made profession of faith, yet were, in the matter of moral conformity, as if they stood afar off. It was only the rarer and more elect spirits that were made by it new and true men.

The difference is so vital that James essays to explain its cause; he will have his readers understand why men

who hear the same word so widely differ, are agreed in faith but are as aliens in religion. He does it by a figure of remarkable force and significance. The mere hearer is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror—beholding himself, then going away and straightway forgetting what manner of man he was. But the true hearer is a man who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, watchful, studious, bringing himself and his conduct into conformity with what he sees there. To the former the word is a mere mirror. What he sees in it is a reflection of himself; as he looks in, the image of his own face looks out; no beautiful face, indeed, with which its owner does well to be pleased, but a face whose lines and features ought to admonish him of evil, and persuade him to change. Yet so careless is he, so swift to speak, so slow to think, that he goes away and forgets straightway that he ought not to be the manner of man he is. But to the other, the true hearer, the word is "the perfect law."[1] As he contemplates it, the face of the Christ looks into his soul, and invites him to become as He is, to be changed into the same image; and as the face and the soul continue to look into each other, the spirit of the Christ grows in the man, and the life of the Christ becomes the force that determines his conduct. The law secures his liberty; obedience is freedom. He knows the truth, and the truth makes him free, which is what God meant him to be.

II.

The man who thus, by looking into the perfect law, comes to embody or realize its ideal, is a man "blessed in his doing." He is a good man, and so he does good; he

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

lives in harmony with the Divine will, and so he serves the Divine ends. In his emphatic and antithetical manner, James next exhibits the false and the true man in the sphere of conduct. As they do to the "word of truth," so they are in the world of action. The man to whom the word is but a mirror which reflects his own face and form, only seems to be religious, while the man who looks into "the perfect law of liberty" is religious. The former lives in a world of illusions, thinks himself religious while his unbridled tongue makes his irreligion manifest to all; but the latter lives amid realities, is what his God and Father approves, does what blesses and benefits men. The man who hears but does not, in thinking himself religious only "deceives his own heart"—his "religion is vain;" but the man who hears and does, possesses and exhibits "pure religion and undefiled."

Now, the cardinal word in this verse is "religion." What does it mean? It is one of the most ambiguous words in our mother-speech, has too many meanings fitly to express the simple and clear idea James intends here to convey. It sometimes denotes the entire body of institutions, customs, doctrines, history belonging to a given faith, as in "the Christian religion," "the Mohammedan religion," "the religions of Asia." Again, it signifies the conduct or practice which becomes a given profession of faith, as when we distinguish theology and religion, the one term denoting the truths or doctrines believed, the other the life in which they are expressed or realized. Then, religion may mean a system of duty apprehended as commanded by God or due to Him, as distinguished from morality, the system of duty discovered and determined by conscience and reason. Again, it may mean the mode in which a man elects to

make profession of his belief, with its corresponding ideal of life, as when men who would alike claim to be Christians are distinguished as religious and secular, as within or without an order of religion. Once more, religion may denote either the worship or the spirit it ought to express, as when we speak on the one hand of the rites of religion, or on the other distinguish profession and religion. These ambiguities belong to our English term, but in no way to the term James employs. That had a simple and precise enough meaning; denoted the *cultus*, the external worship, the ceremonial usages, the form or body in which the inward piety was articulated. Neither the word nor any cognate or derivative occurs in the LXX., but the noun θρησκεία[1] and the verb θρησκεύω[2] in the Book of Wisdom. In each case the reference is to the worship of idols, and so to outward observances and rites. Θρησκεία occurs frequently in Josephus, always denoting, with one possible exception,[3] the public and ceremonial worship which the king may forsake,[4] the people perform,[5] and the priests administer.[6] In Clemens Romanus[7] it denotes an outer and manifest worship of God as opposed to the outer and manifest worship of his own image which Nebuchadnezzar had commanded to be set up. In this, the Hellenistic followed the classical usage. The term denotes worship in a ceremonial and ritual sense—the service which can be performed and seen, not the spirit which prompts it.[8] This meaning made it even more applicable to foreign than to native Greek worship, to the mysteries than to the national and State religion.[9] So, too, in the New Testament it denotes the worship of

[1] Ch. xiv. 18, 27. [2] Ch. xi. 15; xiv. 16.
[3] Ant. i. 13. 1. [4] Ib. viii. 11. 1. [5] Ib. xii. 5. 4.
[6] Bel. Jud. iv. 5. 2. [7] 1 Cor. xlv.
[8] Herod. ii. 37, 64; Dion. Hal. 63. [9] Plut. Alex. 2.

angels,[1] which was a matter of mystic rites, not of pious reverence. And Paul uses it to characterize the Pharisees, "the straitest sect of our religion,"[2] the sect devoted to the most rigorous ceremonial, most loyal to traditional observances.

Now, the word in James must be interpreted through the established, and especially the Hellenistic, use. Θρησκεία was to him the service, the ceremonial, as it were, of the new faith, the mode in which its inward spirit and reverence was outwardly manifested and declared. It was the counterpart in the new economy of the rites and sacrifices which had characterized the old; the moral and spiritual service which Christ had made to displace and replace the sacerdotalism of Moses. It did not denote the whole of the Christian religion, only the manner and form of its manifestation, the character and sphere of its distinctive and visible worship. The context shows the relation in which θρησκεία stood to the genesis and ideal of the Christian life. Faith came by hearing. A man was renewed, begotten again, by "the word of truth." That word heard, received, and implanted by faith saved the soul; the soul saved had to meditate on the law that had given freedom and life, had to contemplate its living and gracious Ideal till changed into the same form, till the beholder and the Beheld became alike, the younger brother on earth conformed to the image of the Firstborn in heaven. And the outward service which could alone express this inward spirit was the Christ-like; not the old ceremonial and sacerdotal worship, but beneficence and blamelessness, visiting "the fatherless and widows, and keeping himself unspotted from the world."

[1] Col. ii. 18. [2] Acts xxvi. 5.

III.

James in so teaching stood in essential harmony with all the other teachers of the New Testament. His doctrine was the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount. There the Master had exhibited religion freed from the forms and sacrifices of the priest, the dominion and ceremonies of the scribe, become a life of humanest, stillest, unhasting, unresting duty. Nothing was so characteristic in the new religion as the way in which it broke with the ancient ideals of worship. Jesus was no priest, called no priest to be an apostle, gave to no man He called a name or office implying priestly authority or functions; said no word, did nothing that signified for Himself respect and for His people retention of sacerdotal observances or rites. With Him God was Spirit, could be worshipped anywhere, at any time, by any one, but only in spirit and in truth. No duty could be performed by sacrifices, all duties through love; to love God with the whole heart and the neighbour as one's self was to fulfil the whole law; and on this matter the apostolic writers understood and followed him completely. Nothing is more remarkable than the way in which they leave all ceremonial and sacerdotal elements out of the religion, translating all the terms descriptive of these which they use into a spiritual sense, and emphasizing all the elements of intellectual and ethical significance. Their endeavour was not only to repeat, but to transcend the law. To Paul it was the dispensation of the letter, the ministration of death, written and engraven on stone;[1] to be under it was to "be held in bondage under the rudiments of the world;" to return to it was to "turn

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

back to the weak and beggarly elements."[1] To the author of Hebrews it was only "a shadow of good things to come," imperfect in all its acts and places of worship. Paul liked to look behind the law to the promise; Hebrews seeks to get behind Aaron to Melchizedek. But the significant thing for us here is the change they introduce into the technical terms of the older worship. These are used only as metaphors, the more emphatically to enforce ethical duties or spiritual truths. So Paul introduces his great discourse on duty with the words, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."[2] So he describes the gifts he has received from the Philippians as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God;"[3] and he urges the Ephesians to "walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell."[4] The author of the Hebrews exhorts his readers to offer up through Christ "the sacrifices of praise to God continually;"[5] and Peter describes the men he addresses as "elect, built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."[6]

Now James follows up, and as it were gives accurate expression to the ideas that underlie these phrases and exhortations. The new religion, like the old, has its *θρησκεία*, but the new, unlike the old *θρησκεία*, is ethical through and through—spiritual holiness before God, dutiful service of man. Where rites and symbols stood under Moses, a benevolent and blameless life stands under Christ.

[1] Gal. iv. 3, 9. [2] Rom. xii. 1. [3] Phil. iv. 18.
[4] Eph. v. 2. [5] Ch. xiii. 15. [6] 1 Ep. ii. 5.

The new faith, like the old, has its sacrifices, but they are affairs of the spirit, the complete consecration of the man in thought and act to God. The Hebrew who neglected the worship received by tradition from the fathers was alien from "the Jews' religion;" the man was no Christian who left uncultivated the graces made illustrious by the Person of Christ, or unpractised the virtues that were the truest proofs of faith and acts of piety. The filial spirit reverences a father by obedience; the pious spirit worships God by the active and anticipating love of a devoted life.

RELIGION AND CONDUCT.

RELIGION AND CONDUCT.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—JAMES i. 27.

THE Epistle of James, though with few doctrinal, has many practical interests, and of these the greatest is the relation of religion to conduct. This question Jesus may be said to have solved once for all, and into the meaning and worth of His solution no one had clearer insight than James.

I.

The ancient pagan religions had no concern with morality, taught none, cared for no man's, made no man moral; but the religion Jesus instituted was so penetrated by moral purpose, so charged with moral force, that no man could believe it and be an immoral man. As little as an ancient Greek or Roman could have conceived religion apart from worship, can a Christian conceive religion apart from morality. The society Jesus founded was so little organized for worship in the ancient sense, that no charge was so common and so fatal to the earliest Christians as the charge of atheism; but so splendid was the passion for conduct He created, that nothing so struck their enemies as the purity and devotion of their lives.

And the extraordinary thing was that, while the Christian society made men moral, it did not exalt moral teaching, did not concentrate its didactic and hortatory energies on the moralities.

It did the very opposite. Considered purely as moralists, there were finer teachers without the Church than within it. The apostle of intensest moral purpose and power was the man who most preached faith, most declared works dead, unfruitful, inefficacious. But then what surprised was this, that in preaching faith He created works. The morality that was only moral was fertile only of systems, produced beautiful but only impotent ideals; but the religion that despised works was powerful to translate the sublimest into still sublimer realities. The faith that came by hearing begot a life that was of God; to it moral action was as natural, and as spontaneous and necessary, as the blossom to the stem, which it crowns with beauty. And so the spirit and the truth which came by Jesus created a religious service which at once realized the prophetic ideal, and showed man doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with his God, devoted to the practice of "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are of good report."

The natural relation in which the religion of Christ stood to morality, blossoming as it were into it, was due to the way in which He affected and handled the moral subject, to the change He worked in the springs of our human activities. To dream or to draw moral ideals is an easy but a most ineffectual thing. If a man is allowed to moralize on his own failure he will take it kindly; it will become almost as good to him as success. Action only

articulates nature, conduct but expresses character, and men can speak things that please reason without being able to do things that change nature. Yet the nature must be made good if the man is to do good; to the good nature good is natural, its spontaneous expression.

We may imagine an attempt to make a man moral by formal instruction. A splendid ideal is placed before him, but he must be educated before he can feel its attraction, must be allowed to act that he may struggle towards realization. To guide him in this struggle he would need a chart of life, showing him how he ought to act in the many possible concurrences and collisions of circumstance. But here come difficulties. Suppose a teacher capable of drawing such a chart, how could the man it has to guide learn it? Or what pledge would there be that in the critical moment of practice, or of passion, he could or would recall the lesson he had learned? For here lies the grand difficulty. Grant a man started in life with a chart of conduct printed by nature or education on the inmost soul of him, whence would come the desire, the will, and power to follow it? Without these the moral ideal is only a beautiful illusion; with these the good does not so much stand without as live within the man, nature and ideal being wedded and welded in him into an articulated and harmonious whole.

II.

Now, this marriage and fusion of nature and ideal is exactly the thing moralists have never been able to accomplish. The two sublimest moral systems, the Platonic and the Stoic, produced no correspondent elevation of action. The ideals of the Academy and the Porch did not

penetrate Greek and Roman nature, and so did not transform and exalt Greek and Roman character. Where they failed Christ succeeded, and He did so not by virtue of what He said, but by virtue of what He was, and was believed to be. Christ's words as words would have been as impotent as Plato's; they owe their power to His Person, their virtue lives in Him. He is the Power by which they are ever being translated into spirit and character and conduct.

And this power is due to the way in which His Person affects man—its action on our nature. It creates the enthusiasm of a great love, a passion that rejoices to be spent in service. "God is love," and by love man is made; where it commands, obedience is spontaneous and complete. A man possessed by a supreme affection is invulnerable to temptation, capable of the most unselfish and uncalculating service, ready for any suffering or sacrifice. The mercenary who has no country, no home, no heart, who lives simply for plunder and for pay, fights to-day on one side and to-morrow on another, governed in his choice of masters by his greed or his whim. But the patriot who loves his fatherland lives for it; love of freedom, home, faith, the inheritance the fathers have bequeathed that he may transmit to his sons, so reign in him that where it commands he cannot choose but obey. The mercenary ever open to the bribe, is ready to sell himself to the highest bidder; but the patriot lifted by a great love above fear or favour, feels tempted by no bribe, will but taste the joy of sacrifice if, by gathering a sheaf of foemen's spears into his side, he can break their phalanx and allow the stout hearts behind him to strike for freedom and the fatherland.

And Christ creates a love which infinitely transcends in force and quality and scope the love of the patriot. As regards its influence on action, it has one very remarkable characteristic: it so affects alike the springs or motives, and the ends or issues of conduct, as to intensify and exalt both, by the one reconciling the individual with the universal will, by the other making the man, even where most local or specific in his action, the organ and agent of a universal purpose. To love Christ is to love God, and to be in sympathy with the God-like everywhere and in all its forms. The God loved is not an abstract sovereign will, but the Divine Father of men, who wills the good alike of each separate individual and the collective race. But to love God is to love His ends, to serve them at all moments, in all acts, to feel one's self constituted a minister of His beneficence and grace. While the love on this side lifts man out of narrow and insulating individualism, and makes him, though a unit, a conscious member of a universe built and pervaded by Divine energies, and ruled for Divine ends, it also on the other side becomes love of man, a holy enthusiasm in his service and for his good. Christ is to the man who loves Him incorporated humanity; in Him the ideal of the race is so personalized that devotion to Him becomes devotion to it. He approves whatever can exalt and bless humanity, disapproves whatever depraves or curses it. Every good deed done, though unto the least of mankind, is done unto Him; not to help man is to be unfaithful to the Christ. Where love is made so completely universal, yet so intensely particular, it shapes alike the regnant purposes and the individual choices of the man. So supreme a love seeks no law but the will of the Beloved, rejoices to obey, and in obedience lives.

God as He is in Christ is but the living love which wills the happiness of man. Love to God is but this will become articulate, active, ministrant in a man that it may the better work the good of men.

III.

But this is not all: the love which reconciles man to God and the ends of God, and which directs his will to the service of his kind, is a love which penetrates and exalts his whole nature. It makes him, compared with the old type and state of man, "a new creature," made in the image of Christ, not after the likeness of Adam. There is a Divine ambition in the gospel; it can be satisfied with nothing less than God-likeness. To it a good thing is not good till done by a good man; it never forgets that bad men are the cause of bad deeds. A good thing done for an evil end may benefit its object as much as if its end were good; but it does not improve, it injures the doer, and so it does not please, it offends God. A miser may, by force of public or other opinion, be coerced into doing a charitable thing. His money, though grudgingly given, will go as far and, so far as mere money can do good, will do as much as the gift of the most open-handed generosity. But there the good ends; in every other respect there is evil. The man is made miserable in his own soul, and grows more miserly in consequence. He hates in an increased degree beneficence; regards it as a species of robbery against which he must protect himself by meaner and falser ways. Charity, too, has become less charitable; and where help is given without human kindliness it goes but a little way, degenerates into a sort of taxation which

irritates alike those on whom and for whom it is levied. Again, a man may mean to utter a slander, but is hindered by the appearance of a person who either knows the truth or the intended victim. But the silence does not change the would-be slanderer into a speaker of truth; nay, it leaves the matter in his imagination and on his tongue, gathering in violence and in virulence behind the dams of prudence or of circumstance that hold it back. So it is not enough that a good deed be done or a bad left undone; it is needful that the motive of the action be right, that the moral nature of the actor be sound and good. Coleridge said, "It is not the motive that makes the man, but the man the motive." But if the main thing is the man, it is evident that what most affects for good the moral nature of man will most contribute to a realized morality. And it is here where the power of Christ has been most signally manifested. The change he has worked in the person has worked a change in the person's conduct; and he has been able to live most nobly who could most truly say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." [1]

The points that have been emphasized are precisely the points James emphasizes. The man who has so looked into the perfect law of liberty as to be possessed and inspired by its ideal, is the man who not only seems to be, but is religious. His religion is at once a right-doing and a right-being, which are alike resultant from the word of truth he has heard, and the new law which through it has become the rule or norm of his life. The life that before God moves and develops in inner harmony with

[1] Gal. ii. 20.

the eternal love appears before man as a life of dutiful beneficence to the widow and the fatherless, and of spotless and healthful holiness amid the impurities of time. The good the man is and does forms the natural and spontaneous expression of what he has in the hands of Christ become.

IV.

The truth which we have here attempted to exhibit has great significance in relation to certain old controversies. It is enough to indicate here its relation to two of these. (1) It settles the question as to the relation of morality to religion. Two notions have been common: first, that religion has nothing to do with morality; second, that it is nothing but morality. The first was a pagan notion, and is now possible only where men return to ideas of religion utterly alien to those of Christ. The second was the favourite position of modern Rationalism, the idea of religion the eighteenth century formulated, loved to speculate about, not to realize. For the men who were most zealous for the reduction of religion to morality were neither the most zealous nor the most successful in translating morality into conduct. To be this we must think as James thought—morality is but the outer service which expresses the inward spirit of faith and love. If we so conceive it, we shall see that the religious man must be moral, the man who is really moral in being and action must be religious. Religion is the manifestation of morality; morality the incarnation, the manifestation in the flesh of religion. (2) But our discussion has a no less significant bearing on the old question as to the basis and the standard of right. Men have often spoken as if the ethics

of religion were the ethics of utility, all the more selfish that their appeal was the hope of an everlasting reward and the fear of everlasting loss. And for this view supposed Christian moralists, coldly didactic like Paley, have given even more occasion than perfervid preachers who have played with terror to the shame and despite of truth. But the view is as false as it is mischievous. The basis of Christian ethics is transcendental, its ideals are universal. The Christian man does not do good that he may be happy; it is because he is happy that he does good. He does not obey that he may live; he obeys because he lives. There is nothing that is so unselfish as the enthusiasm of a large love, and the largest love and the most unselfish enthusiasm are those inspired by Christ. They ask no reward but the glory of service, to be allowed to live for the person loved. And his ends are not those of expediency or the garnered experience of the race; they are God's—the ends after and for which the universe was built. He who lives for these lives for eternity; though the field of his activity may be time, the home of his spirit, the source of his joy, is the bosom of the Father.

GOOD AND EVIL AT THE HAND OF GOD.

GOOD AND EVIL AT THE HAND OF GOD.

"What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"—Job ii. 10.

In no book is the profoundest of moral problems more sublimely discussed or more nearly solved than in the Book of Job. The solution is the completer and the deeper that it is given, not in metaphysical terms, which are often unreal in the very degree that they are abstract, but in terms historical yet poetic, full of the reality that belongs to the actual and the concrete. Job, as it were, personifies the solution; the victory over evil achieved through his "patience" is not his, but God's. He stands there for all time the type or symbol of the impotence of evil to harm the truly good, of its inability to prevail against the Divine energies or frustrate the Divine ends, or to do aught else than create the discipline of suffering which purifies the patient and perfects the obedient. The evil Job suffers becomes through the hand of God the condition of higher good.

I.

The more eminent of the Old Testament saints are types or representatives of certain virtues; they embody in

their characters and illustrate by their lives the graces that most adorn godliness. Abraham is the example of faithfulness—the man who, tried by loneliness, by homelessness, by the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick, by the long tarrying of the promised seed and the longer tarrying of the promised land, yet remained invincible in his faith, and died "the friend of God," certain that He would in some far-off day fulfil His promise. Moses is the type of meekness—the man who had a great work to do, and did it without his soul being vainly lifted up; who loved and served unweariedly a people distrustful of heart, stubborn of will, forgetful of past deliverance, mindful only of present ease. Job is the symbol of patience, bearing his losses and sorrows not only without complaint, but with continued trust in God; with such trust, too, as enabled God to work out his deliverance and, by a splendid example, victoriously vindicate His own ways to man. This patience is not so much a single virtue as the ripened fruit of all the virtues, or rather the common soil on which they grow. It is, on one side, the hardy endurance that can bear trouble unmoved; on another, the "patient continuance in well-doing" that may be tempted, but can never be induced to turn aside to ill.

In Job this "patience had its perfect work." This work can be performed only through sorrow and suffering; where they are not it has no vocation. They constitute, as it were, the conditions of its action; only where trouble is can patience work out stronger faith in God, greater sweetness of temper, and holiness of life. What we may term the minor deities fill a large place in every man's affections and thoughts, making it possible for many to be religious because of what they enjoy rather than what they believe.

The love and comforts of home, the esteem of friends, the pleasures of social intercourse and respect, the joy of health, the interest that springs from daily change, the satisfaction that comes from activities exercised, from wants felt only to be gratified—these and such-like make up much of the common contentment with things as they are, the placid acquiescence in comfortable conditions that passes with many for faith in God. But if these comfortable conditions perish, the sunny contentment does not always survive. The loss of the minor deities has often carried down with it faith in the living God. The piety that is born of ease is an emptier and infirmer thing than the piety that is born of struggle and sacrifice. What dies in moral conflict is no moral reality, and the conflict may be needed in order that it may by killing the unreal make room for the real. The religion of many a man is of Jacob's kind, conditional, the conditions being presented by man to God rather than by God to man. "If God will keep me in this way that I go, and give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, then shall the Lord be my God."[1] When man so bargains, God acts most graciously when He refuses to fulfil the conditions. A faith that is built on selfishness is no faith in God.

But this subordination of the Supreme to the minor deities is abhorrent to the spirit of Job. In prosperity and health he had been "a man perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil."[2] In adversity and disease he had the patience that remained faithful to the Divine will, submissive to Providence, and trustful of the wisdom he thought beneficent even while it sent to him suffering and loss. Satan, with all the cunning, but also with all the

[1] Gen. xxviii. 20, 21. [2] Job i. 1.

unwisdom that ever marks a wicked spirit, had declared that Job served God for profit; that his religion was but organized selfishness; that were the Divine rule as harsh as hitherto it had been kind, Job's worship would cease, and he would curse God to his face.[1] And the Divine answer had in effect been,[2] "Try your Satanic theory on him, act as if you were supreme, and see whether in a world, where the devil were almighty, Job would be faithless to Me and worship thee as god." And so for a while Satan had his will, and calamities fell thick and fast upon the devoted patriarch. He lost his worldly goods, Sabean freebooters carrying away his flocks and herds. He lost the home and children he loved, a storm from the wilderness smiting his homestead and burying in its ruins his sons and daughters. But he bore his troubles without breaking his heart, lost his worldly all without losing his faith, and summed up his comfort in the ever-memorable words, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."[3]

Still Satan was not satisfied. The man had health, and the strong has heart for anything. Were his health touched, his faith would perish. It was touched; Satan, almighty for the moment, "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."[4] But the loathsome disease did not vanquish his trustful piety, and the mimic deity was forced to see the man he had afflicted praise God in his pain. Yet Job's wife was evidently of Satan's mind; she thought faith impossible and life intolerable in the changed conditions, and so she bade her husband "curse," forsake, or, as it were, forswear, "God and die."[5] But his answer

[1] Job i. 9–11. [2] Job i. 12. [3] Job i. 21.
[4] Job ii. 7. [5] Job ii. 9.

through the foolish woman to the still more foolish Satan was, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

It is at this point, then, that his patience, which is but another name for his invincible faith, most grandly asserts its presence and its power. His troubles have not conquered his piety, or come like clouds between his soul and God. But this beautiful trust, this lovely quietude of spirit as to God, did not leave him as passive and acquiescent in his relation to man. His patience was most impatient of all human intermeddling with the Divine judgments; his spirit was most shrinkingly sensitive to every touch by the hard, rude hands of men. And so, while his speech is most submissive to God, it is fierce, defiant, even utterly contemptuous, towards his ill-judging friends. They, indeed, constituted his great affliction, because ever erring as his wife erred, and his answers to them were but expositions and variations of his answer to her. "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

II.

What do these words mean? Is Job consoling himself with the thought that God is the author of evil; that he is in the hands of an almighty power that has both the will and the right to do wrong? That were a most disconsolate and desolating thought, not productive of faith in a God whose name is the synonym of good. Were the Divine will only almighty, were it not also righteous and beneficent, man could not, while constituted as he is, worship it as holy or acknowledge it as wisest and best. Is Job an exception, the example of a man able to revere a blind Fate, to adore

and obey an immoral Force, indifferent to good and evil, able to do or inflict either without concern, without regard to desert or result? That is the question we must now attempt to answer.

The word that holds the key to the problem is *evil.* What does it here signify? Evil may be of three kinds—moral, intellectual, or physical. Moral evil may refer either to state and character, or to act, or, which is the more common, to both. A depraved man has an evil character and is in an evil state, and his acts as guilty are evil. His character has been formed by the sins of the past and is expressed in the sins of the present; the bad nature at once embodies and reveals the bad deed, and the deed has its full significance only when viewed in its organic connection with the nature. Intellectual evil may be either want of knowledge—and then it is ignorance—or misapprehension and perversion of truth—and then it is error. The first may be a simple and necessary imperfection, involving no moral blame; but the second is a result of will, or of a nature will has helped to form, passing, therefore, into the category of the morally and spiritually bad. Physical evil, again, is comprehensive enough to include every form of suffering whatever its source or course, its motive or end, whether due to the action of Providence or the conduct of man. Whether physical evil bear a moral character, deserving either praise or blame, depends on many considerations, mainly such as determine its cause and purpose, its relation to the moral laws and energies of the universe. This division, with each of its heads, raises many questions which cannot be here discussed; all we can do is to inquire as to the sense in which Job uses the term evil.

1. Does he mean that we receive or suffer moral evil at the hand of God? Moral evil is sin, and sin is the transgression of the law. Law, whether written in the constitution or conscience of man, in the order of the universe or in the Divine Word, is simply the manifested or embodied will of God; this will, indeed, not as arbitrary, but as the vehicle or executive and realizing energy of Eternal Righteousness. And sin is just the antagonism of the human nature or will to the Divine, the attempt of a free yet mortal being to set himself in opposition to the eternal and immutable right to raise or erect his own inclinations into a law for himself and the universe. Moral evil is just the absolute enemy and contradiction of God; the denial in nature and act of His right to be God, the moral Lawgiver and Sovereign of man. The bad nature is a nature abhorrent to the Divine, the bad act is an act done against the Divine will, and designed to defeat the Divine purpose. And so with moral evil God has no more fellowship than light has with darkness. He is good, it is bad; He is holy, it is guilty; He is righteous, it is wrong; He is love, it is hate; He is happiness, it is misery. In this sense evil is impossible to God, and man can never suffer or receive it at His hand.

And it is evident that Job does not in any degree or measure here think of moral evil. His plea is that God is as God-like, as much to be loved and trusted and praised, when He inflicts evil as when He confers good; that man is as much bound to suffer the one patiently, even gratefully, as to be thankful for the other. But this plea would have been impossible if the evil meant had been moral. Many people, indeed, speak of the will of God as if it could do harsh things without being cruel, unequal things without

being unjust, and have ascribed things to Him that they would have held themselves accursed had they even schemed to do. But where Absolute Sovereignty is so conceived as to be an offence to the human conscience, it is not conceived as Divine. Rank or dignity does not raise above obligation; the higher the dignity the more binding becomes the law of gentleness or charity. The basis of all faith in the ways of God is belief in His goodness. Did man not believe that the nature and will, the purpose and end of God were good, he could not say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Were Satan the Almighty, were he a being in whom infinite strength was joined to infinite badness, it were impossible to any moral being to do other than hate him, to despise him in life and defy him in the very agonies and article of death, all the more that he had in his resistless strength the chance and means of indulging his boundless malice. Trust in God even while He slays only expresses the faith that He is in slaying good, that He has gracious ends not otherwise attainable, attained so at His pain no less than ours, but so attained that our good and His glory may be together furthered and secured. And so Job patiently received evil at the hand of God, certain that it signified only higher and more durable good.

2. Does he mean intellectual evil? So far as imperfection of knowledge which is due to limitation of intellect is evil, it is an evil we receive at the hand of God. And we necessarily receive it if we are to be at all. The Omniscient is the infinite intellect, and even the Almighty could not create another infinite, let alone an infinity of infinities. That belongs to the region of impossibilities, and is not even conceivably possible. But simple limitation of nature

is no evil, properly so called. A being perfect in its own order and degree is good, and knowledge perfect within its own range is, though infinitely remote from omniscience, not evil. But where the will works through the intellect, creating ignorance or error, evil becomes real. If man does not seek to know the best and think the truest, he sins; and the error in thought is translated into the wrong in action. But God is not the author of ignorance, but of knowledge; He is the Illuminator, Maker of man's light, not of his darkness. All truth is of God, all error of man. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding." The light of heaven never leads astray, and our mental evils, whether due to confusion or error, we inflict on ourselves or suffer from man, never from God.

3. Does Job mean physical evil? In moral and intellectual evil man is active, in physical he is passive; in the former he acts or does, in the latter he suffers or endures. He may, indeed, inflict physical evil on himself or others, but this infliction is a moral act, bearing all the qualities and responsibilities of moral action. What is here regarded as physical evil is suffering pain or shock of nature working sorrow and distress. This evil may be of various kinds and proceed from various causes.

(1) *Hereditary.* The child has often to suffer from the sin of his father, or even the sins of remote ancestors. Sins do not die with the sinner's death; they live after him, subtly working evils he little imagined in the mad hour of indulgence. While infancy and childhood remain it will be true that more of the innocent suffer than the guilty. The evil-doer who sins against the nature God gave him, sins also against the nature he himself helps to give, works wasting feebleness and disease in generations that are to

be. No man can calculate the inherited misery of this world. Could but a fraction of it rise in terrible vision before the imagination of the most selfish debauchee, it would startle him from his sin and drive him to seek the lost purity, the stainless moral integrity, which is even from the standpoint of nature the noblest physical legacy men can leave to man.

(2) *Punitive.* The suffering that follows close on the heels of sin is one of the rods by which God chastises the sinner. If a man indulges in strong drink, his indulgence causes in him greater mischief and misery than medicine can cure. If he is imprudent and subjects his strength to a strain greater than it can bear, then he suffers from a vigour bent and broken into weakness. And what happens to the individual may happen to the nation or society. Pestilences are often punitive evils, judgments of God against men who have broken His great social and sanitary laws. Science loves to declare physical law inviolable, and its inviolability but means that where man transgresses he must be punished. Disobedience to the constitution God gave and the order He maintains ought to involve, as it does involve, suffering and loss.

(3) *Corrective.* Men often suffer as much from ignorance or inexperience as from sin. The child who puts its hand into the fire does not expect the fire to burn, but it burns nevertheless. The man who, giddy of brain, ventures too near the dizzy precipice, reels and falls, and finds that the gravitation which binds atoms together can bring disaster to the incautious man. And corrective suffering is beneficent; it teaches man to obey law by correcting his neglect of it; it compels conformity to the order within which he lives.

A universe without law were a universe without order, and where no order is no reason has been or can be. The individual who disobeys must suffer, and learn by his suffering that law may be established and order reign to the universal good.

Now, the physical suffering can in each of these cases be regarded as immediately or remotely from God. The order under which we live is His, its laws are His, and they act by His will and for His ends. And so a devout man, while he may regard his own or another's sin as the primary, may also regard God as the ultimate, cause of his suffering, though causing it as the necessary condition of good. But none of those classes and kinds of evil can apply to the case before us. The evil which Job had received from the hand of God was not hereditary, because it had nothing to do with his descent, or the sins of former men; nor was it punitive, meant to chastise him for his past sins, for he was "a perfect man and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil;" nor was it corrective, for he had not even in an unconscious way broken the laws either of the physical or social world. And so we must look elsewhere for his meaning, and may find it in a class of physical evils still undiscussed and undescribed.

(4) *Tentative.* What is so named is the suffering meant to be testing and disciplinary, at once to try and to educate. It is not designed to tempt, or seduce to evil, but to test, to reveal the real character and quality of the man, and to train or fit to nobler purposes and for higher ends. This tentative and disciplinary suffering is a necessary stage in the path to perfection, a condition essential to the most perfect obedience. The necessity is rooted in the very nature of things. Moral character can be formed only

through conflict, and the higher the character the fiercer must the conflict be. The forces of moral evil active in our world cannot spare a good man—must ever, as evil, strive to overcome his good. God can develop the highest type and quality of excellence only by the discipline of pain, the method and way of sorrow. An untried Abraham would have been no friend of God; only through trial could his faithfulness be manifested or even attained. Paul carried a thorn in his flesh; and had it not been there, so borne as to be overcome, no heavenly vision would have been either possible or realized. The same necessity made the sinless also the tempted Jesus; and the most holy Person of our race and history was "made perfect through suffering;" the necessity being so real and great that "though He were a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things that He suffered." Where sorrow like His is not endured, perfection like His cannot be attained.

And this tentative evil, this suffering that makes perfect, is what Job feels he is receiving at the hand of God. The bad moral forces of the world, personified in Satan, seek to conquer him. God allows them to do so, must allow them because the world is moral, and Job a free man who can be obedient only through choice, achieve perfection only by liberty. And he feels that what works by God's permission is, in a sense, His minister working against Him, but yet by the wisdom that restrains and directs even the evil forced to work for Him. And so Job suffers the evil, sure that within and through it there is working the God of good. He knows in whom he has believed, and his faith rises victorious over loss. A world which has the righteous God for its Ruler can never know ultimate evil. The evil that

comes to the righteous man must be allowed to come to him as a thing that, however hard to bear for the moment, has the promise of diviner gifts and graces. Suffering is harsh only when inflicted for its own sake; is gracious when inflicted that it may exalt and beautify him who suffers. And so it is in the faith that God does not rejoice in man's sorrow, that loss to man is pain to God, but that when it comes, as come it must, to the man who fears God, it brings a blessing in its cold hand, and eternal though unrealized joy in its heavy heart, Job asks his dark yet strangely bright question, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER.

PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER.[1]

"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names."—Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4.

THE old Hebrew psalmist, by placing in striking contrast the infinitely great and the infinitely little, brings out, in the most effective way possible, the providence of God as at once comprehensive enough to superintend the interests of the collective universe, and kindly and careful enough not to neglect the smallest individual. While His omniscient eye numbers the innumerable stars, His gentle touch heals the broken heart. While His fiat holds the listening planets to their spheres, His tender hand binds up our bleeding wounds. These are old, very old thoughts, the imaginings of ancient Hebrew men, who little dreamed of the strange secrets hidden in the earth beneath their feet, or the heaven above their heads; but, though between their day and ours lie centuries crowded with the most splendid discoveries man has made, yet neither science nor philosophy has ever

[1] Preached in the January of 1873. It may help us to measure the distance we have travelled since then, especially as it brings back the proposal which a man, eminent after a sort in science, once made for the determination of a religious question. A few sentences of the above have appeared in another connection; and the date must be the apology for certain qualities in the sermon, which is printed as it was preached twenty years ago, and certain references in the concluding paragraphs which relate to a state of things now, happily, no more.

proclaimed a truth that can match in sublimity, equal in beauty, or rival in its wealth of eternal human interest, this old Hebrew faith—"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names."

Scripture everywhere teaches or assumes that nature, the arena in which man has lived and sinned and sorrowed, is also the medium through which God is active and visible. To the ancient Hebrew and the early Christian the processes of creation were the ways of the Creator. What is now attributed to law was then ascribed to God. Nature was a revelation; visible things declared the invisible, manifested the eternal power and Godhead. Fire was the servant, flame the minister, of God; His voice stilled the noise of the sea, and the tumult of the people. In the Sermon on the Mount final and perfect expression was given to the silent teachings of nature, though these had been divined before by the quickened instinct of many a human heart. God adorned the lily, made its beauty more beautiful and royal than the gaudy grandeur of Solomon; His love fed the fowls of the air, who neither thought nor toiled nor span; His love extended to the very sparrows that were sold for less than a farthing, and did not allow them to fall unnoticed to the ground. And, if God cared for the meanest and smallest things in nature, would He neglect the noblest and the largest? From the hour when that sermon was preached many a weary wanderer, sitting by the wayside of life, has plucked from the modest floweret, blushing almost unseen, the truth—The God who cares for this delicate but trivial thing will not neglect me. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

Scripture, when it thus teaches, but utters what has been a perennial instinct of the human heart. Perhaps no man ever stood in the presence of a great trouble without being driven by his own deepest instincts to seek strength and comfort from a being mightier than himself. Many a hitherto godless mariner, battling with the wild waves, has called with simple and fervid faith on the God whose name the child had loved to reverence before the man had learned to profane. Many a poor burdened woman, whose heart was well-nigh breaking in the presence of a sorrow she could not bear alone, has grown calm and strong as her agony rose into a great cry after God. Instincts like these, characteristic of man the wide world over, tell that the Creator has planted within the human spirit the faculty, to which, when danger from within or without threatens, the faith is native, that "He who healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds," also delighteth to hear and answer the prayer of His afflicted creatures.

Could, then, the word of Scripture, or the instincts of man, settle the question, whether prayer avails alike in the spiritual and physical spheres, the question would have been long ago settled. But science cannot accept these as the decisive authorities. In her own domain she is supreme, can trust her own discoveries and laws, can trust nothing that denies or contradicts these. Science knows only a nature governed by invariable law, where every physical effect has a physical cause, and where such foreign elements as prayer or interference can have no place. It were useless, then, to argue the question with science on the grounds of Scripture or human instinct. Verified facts are certain, indisputable; if any authority stands in the way of the facts, so much the worse for it—it must go to the ground. Hence

the reality of providence and the efficacy of prayer need to be vindicated, not by authority, but by reason, and reason biassed neither by the one sided culture of science, nor the one-sided culture of Scripture, but inspired by the love of that truth which is to be sought everywhere, and embraced wherever found.

And here let me observe that those periodical collisions between science and religion, as old as their mutual existence, ever assuming new forms, yet ever implying old principles, are very much to be deplored. Their interests, like those of capital and labour, are the same; their conflicts proceed from the same causes—want of knowledge, and its result, want of sympathy. Study of science begets a habit of mind inimical to belief; only what has been verified, or demonstrated, can be accepted as true. Study of religion awakens instincts and hopes averse to science, which abhor its rigid method, its arid results, the remorseless rigour with which it banishes spirit from nature, and reduces the world to an immense machine. But, perhaps, were each more at home in the other's domain, this jealousy would cease. Truth is truth everywhere; and the facts of nature ought to be as sacred as the holiest realities of faith.

Religion owes much to science; has received from it light that has glorified and enlarged some of her sublimest truths. God has been robed in other and grander attributes since science disclosed the secrets of the universe, and extended the horizon of human thought into a boundless and peopled immensity—into a busy and immeasurable past. Think what an idea of the greatness and might of God astronomy has given us! Once this earth was to man the universe; but now the telescope has revealed stars and

systems innumerable; has resolved the glorious milky way that girdles like a zone of light the midnight heavens into countless hosts of suns; has resolved what seemed to earlier and feebler instruments but nebulous clouds of star-dust into brilliant and wheeling worlds, and reveals the possibility of the discovery of new systems progressing with man's power to penetrate still further the mysterious star-lit, star-filled spaces. Now, consider what a conception is here given us of God. How glorious the majesty of Him who made and upholds these worlds, is present in each at the same moment of time, knows all the many myriad millions that live and breathe within them, compared with the infinitely humbler majesty of Him whose only work was this world, whose only care was man! Yet this exaltation in our thought of God religion owes to science.

But science has exalted and purified our conception of God on many other sides. Once man believed that God had created in six short days, in a manner mechanical and dramatic, this earth and the living creatures that inhabit it. Now, geology has carried us back into a past too remote to be calculable, and shown us creation advancing by processes too slow to be measurable, and so has enlarged our thoughts of that Creator who works noiselessly, fashions worlds as it were by nature, without the aid of miracles, and advances by imperceptible gradations from the meanest beginnings towards the noblest endings. Or take the conservation of force, that brilliant discovery of our nineteenth-century physics. It is teaching us to believe that the collective force of the universe can undergo changes infinitely multitudinous, but can never be increased or diminished,—can go on for ever changing its form, but can never either begin or cease to be. And does not this help

us to conceive a Being inexhaustible in energy and resources? May it not give us a "plastic medium," as the old philosophers phrased it, in and through which He works? Or take the idea of natural law or order that we owe to science. Bring a child to inspect a great and complex engine, and he can only see a maze of wheels, that bewilder with their ceaseless noise and whirl. So uninstructed and superstitious man looks upon nature, and sees only confusion, chaos, the action of arbitrary and isolated forces. But when science comes and reveals law everywhere, moulding the tear or the dewdrop as it rounds the star; active in the great forces that guide the rivers, roll the seas, and shape the mountains, as in the apparently tinier forces that gather or disperse the fleecy clouds, and regulate the growth or decay of the smallest flower,—then man gets the idea of an ordered nature, animated by a great thought, and guided by a great purpose. And the unity of nature suggests the higher unity of its author. The universal reign of law lifts us to the conception of the law-giving and law-abiding God.

But, while we maintain that science has been helpful to our religious ideas, specifically to our conception of God, we must distinctly mark its limits. It has, indeed, done much to ennoble the mind, gladden the life, and ameliorate the sufferings of man. The splendid discoveries of a Jenner have helped to arrest the march of a destructive pestilence; of a Simpson, to still the fatal throb of pain. Science has almost infinitely enlarged our command over the resources of nature, over the pernicious and salutary agencies that sleep within and around us. But see how much lies beyond its province. Man has noble instincts and impulses that impel him to seek the true, to admire the lovely, to worship

the good, to feel after and find the Infinite Perfection in which the true and right and beautiful blend into a divine and personal unity. Man has deep moral convictions of rights that are his dues, of duties that he owes, of an eternal law he is bound to discover and obey. Man has sad and remorseful experiences, the sense of unfulfilled duties, of wasted hours, of sorrows that have turned the anticipated joys of life into utter miseries, of mean and unmanly sins against conscience and heart, against man and God, of losses unredeemed by gain, of the lonely anguish that comes in the hour of bereavement and throws across the life a shadow that no sunshine can pierce. And out of these mingling instincts and impulses, convictions and experiences, rise man's manifold needs, those cravings after rest, those gropings after a strong hand to hold and trust, those cries for pardon, those unutterable groanings after light shed from a divine face upon his gloom, in which lie at once the greatness and the misery of man. Moments come to the spirit of man when these needs are paramount, and it feels as if Nature and her laws were engines to crush the human heart by which we live. And in those supreme moments, whither does man turn? To science? Does not her talk then of nature, and law, and force, and invariable sequence seem like the sardonic prattle of a tempter persuading to belief in a religion of absolute despair? Those are the hours known to many a spirit, when the soul breaks through the thin veil of words woven by the spell of man, and seeks to stand face to face with the Eternal Father.

Religion, then, has its sphere—the moral and spiritual—as science has its—the physical and material. The one should seek to ascertain the condition and laws and final

ends of the spirit, so as to render a perfect spiritual life possible; the other should study the outer world, so as to place its resources entirely at the command of man. There is room and work enough for both, without either superseding or opposing the other. Science ministers in the outer court, religion in the inner; the one is the hewer of wood and drawer of water, the other is the white-robed priest of heaven, keeping the celestial flame burning in the heart of man, and reconciling the errant child to his divine Father. And, if each pursued its proper course, in its own proper sphere, the dreams of many ages might be realized; and, while science reconciled the common and the individual weal, and created a more than utopian happiness and comfort in man's general lot, religion would wed time to eternity, and make what is noblest in man here still nobler from the hope of an ever-progressive immortality.

But, while there is room enough in our little human lives for both science and religion to work as helpful and friendly allies, collisions between them occur now and then, and now the one, and now the other, is the aggressor. Religion, or rather its unaccredited representatives, have frequently enough persecuted science, as in the oft-quoted case of Galileo, or the angry and stormful controversies the theologians raised at the birth of geology. But the wiser religious thinkers have long come to see that theology best preserved its own dignity and independence by leaving science free to pursue its own course, and to tell its own tale. For my part, I have no fear for any single discovery of science, or any verified fact, whatever it may be said to be or to mean. The antiquity of man, though traced immeasurably far back, need not excite in us any terror. Natural selection, or the theory of evolution, whenever established, I am prepared

to receive without feeling in any way my religious faith weakened or injured. But, then, let it be clearly understood that these must cease to be brilliant guesses or bold hypotheses, and become verified facts, before they have any right to claim our faith. Let not men of science blame men of religion for refusing to accept their theories, so long as their own ranks are divided as to whether these theories are or are not valid. That theories of evolution—of the origin of life or species—should be accepted by theologians as verified laws on pain of scientific excommunication, before the scientific world itself has voted, even by a majority, that the theories are true, seems to me an altogether truculent and intolerable proceeding. When science so acts—and she often does so—she becomes the aggressor. No one who has read the brilliant "Lay Sermons" of a distinguished living naturalist can have helped feeling that his bitter innuendoes and contemptuous sneers at "theologians" were altogether unworthy alike of the man and his cause. The latest act of aggression is also from the side of science; its perpetrator Professor Tyndall. He proposes to test the efficacy of prayer. The professor has often written on the matter. But one evening, in the Athenæum Club, London, the happy suggestion was made to him to test by actual experiment the curative force of prayer. If a scientific man propounds a new cure for a given disease, a ward is set apart, and the patients treated according to the new method; and then, after a sufficient trial, the results obtained from the new are compared with those of the old cure, and so the medical world enabled to judge which is the better. So let us have two wards or hospitals; place in the one men who are, in the other men who are not, to be prayed for; and then let the results be compared, and

we shall have scientifically determined whether or not prayer avails in the physical sphere.

We need not, meanwhile, deal with the proposal. Let us examine the principles which it implies. These are explicit enough. Professor Tyndall has repeated them in almost every variety of form and illustration. The laws of nature are uniform, never broken by such interference as prayer entreats. A physical effect produced by other than a physical cause not only would be exceptional, but disturbing to the entire system of nature, and destructive of its harmony. Interference, too, contradicts the great law of the conservation of force, according to which no new energy is ever created, but the changes of nature are the result of infinite conversion of the force of the universe, whose sum-total can neither be increased nor diminished. "Light runs into heat; heat, into electricity; electricity, into magnetism; magnetism, into mechanical force; and mechanical force, into light and heat again." There is an endless cycle of change, but no creation.

Again, Professor Tyndall argues, in nature the terms great and small are unknown. The same law which moulds a tear rounds a planet. Hence, God can do great things in answer to prayer as easily as small; small are as difficult as great. "The Italian wind, gliding over the crest of the Matterhorn, is as firmly ruled as the earth in its orbital revolution round the sun; and the fall of its vapour into clouds is as much a matter of necessity as the return of the seasons. The dispersion, therefore, of the slightest mist by the volition of the Eternal would be as much a miracle as the rolling of the Rhone over the Grimsel precipices, and down Haslithal to Brientz."

The theological position generally occupied in opposition

to the scientific is very much this—God is an Almighty Being, personal, free; it were absurd, then, to deny to Him the power to interfere with the laws of nature. The creation cannot be greater than the Creator; and should He see cause, He will not allow its uniformity or the invariable sequence of cause and effect to stand in His way. Prayer, in certain cases, may be to God a reason for interference; and, when in such cases offered, has His interposition as its natural result.

Now, you will observe how radically in the two cases the premisses differ. The scientific man excludes the idea of God, and reasons from what he observes in the world he studies, or only introduces so much of the divine idea, its immutability, for example, as suits his purpose. The theologian excludes the scientific notion of nature, and reasons from his own conception of God, or imports into the scientific terms a certain religious sense. Men who so differ in standpoints and premisses can never so reason as to convince each other, or do much else than edify and confirm those on their respective sides, who hear or read with a foregone conclusion.

But between these two parties a mediator now and then steps in, who is anxious to give to science and religion the things respectively their own. The material world is handed over to science and invariable law; the spiritual is reserved as the sphere of human supplication and divine aid. Prayer has no place in the physical world, only in the spiritual. But this attempt at mediation saves more than the scientific man is inclined to spare; gives up more than the religious man is inclined to surrender; and so, as a rule, our mediator has to retire, disowned by the very parties he seeks to reconcile.

Now, it seems to me these several positions err, because in none is the discussion carried back to fundamental principles, where a common standpoint might be found. The distinction the mediator draws is too sharp. The premisses of the others are so diametrically opposed that their conclusions can never agree. Let us, then, as carrying us back to first principles, raise the questions, What is Nature? What God's relation to it? and, Must His action upon or within its limits be regarded as "interposition" or "interference"? As to nature, both science and religion ought to remember that to state a law and explain its operation is not necessarily to account for the existence of the law or the things it controls. As science advances there may be less room in nature for sprites and fairies; but its most thorough analysis of the constituents and construction of any organism whatever need not in any degree materialize the sources and ends of universal being.

Of the questions just raised, the one of most moment to us meanwhile is this, What is God's relation to nature? Is it natural or artificial? Men argue as if God stood outside nature; was as extraneous and foreign to it as the maker is to the machine, and so describe His action on it as interference, and conceive His agency as supernatural. But there are two kinds of relation, the natural and the mechanical, or the immanent and the extraneous. For example, the relation of the soul to the body is natural and immanent; the relation of the watchmaker to the watch is mechanical and extraneous. The soul can move and direct the body as it will, but always according to its laws, these being expressly adapted to give the mind sovereign control. But the watchmaker cannot repair or alter the watch without interference with its mechanism,

hindering its action, or disturbing its parts. Now, the scientific man and the theologian alike conceive God's relation to the world to be mechanical; and so the one argues, from his idea of nature, that there has been and can be no interference; the other, from his idea of God, that it both has been and can be again. But change the mechanical and extraneous into the immanent and natural relation, and God's action in nature becomes as natural as the mind's action in the body. He lives in it, acts through it, yet evermore according to its invariable laws. He never interferes, because the soul of the universe and its actions are His. He never breaks its harmony, because its uniformity reposes on His immutability, and its unchangeable laws are but the modes in which the unchangeable God works.

What light does this shed on the questions in dispute? God and nature are not so separated as to be independent and even contrasted existences, but so associated as to be united without being identified. Nature is, as it were, the organism of God, and His action on it is as little supernaural or artificial as the action of my mind through my body; while the distinction of essence and attribute holds in His case as in mine. The physical action of a being, who is within, not without, nature, lying imbedded in it as its soul, cannot be properly described as "interference." That word, indeed, is abhorrent to me; expresses, when so used, no reality, only a great untruth. "Nature" ought to be understood as inclusive, not as exclusive, of God, and "supernatural" as in no way predicable of Him or His agency or action. He is no stranger in His own universe, but its animating force, the source of all its movement, while He Himself remains unmoved.

Hold this, then, brethren, as the truth—Prayer seeks no "interference," nothing supernatural, only the normal action of the universe tempered, perhaps, in special cases to our weakness, or our weakness tempered to it, should this accord with the stable action or will of God. And think, if, in the little universe called man, mind can, in and through its physical organs, exercise energy, and put forth volitions, which can produce changes in the world without, or cause changes in the organism within, yet always in harmony with the invariable or necessary laws of both,—why should we conceive the action of the creative and motive Spirit, immanent in the great universe called nature, as more limited and artificial, less legitimate and natural, than our own? There is no difficulty in the one case that is not implied in the other. Every objection that can be urged against so conceiving God's relation to the universe can be urged against the ordinarily conceived relation of the physical and spiritual natures of man, while the position here maintained has this advantage—it simplifies our conception at once of God and man, makes man the true "image" of God, the Creator the actual archetype of the creature.

And on this ground I can as little forbid prayer in the physical as in the spiritual sphere. What am I? An embodied spirit. And what is my relation to the great embodied Spirit of the universe? That of a child to its father. And shall this living spirit, with its instincts that science cannot satisfy, with its convictions of right and wrong that transcend the physical relations of time, with its sense of sin and sorrow, its shrinking from death and horror of the grave, be persuaded to train to stoical silence any one side of its every-sided relation to its living parent?

Nature is a term or condition of communion between man and God. Man sees in its laws a revelation of the divine will; does not ask the Divine Being to transgress His own laws, but simply asks Him so to administer them as to meet special cases and serve special ends. So understood, prayer in the physical sphere becomes both normal and right. The memory but a few days old of a dread disaster [1] near to shore, almost within cry of human help, so grave a witness alike to the glory and meanness, the heroism and cowardice of man, is still fresh in your minds. Think you, when the ship had gone down, and those hundreds lay struggling in the hungry sea, there would not rise from the soul of many a husband as he battled with the billows beside his drowning wife, from the heart of many a mother who clasped her child that they might die when they could not live together, the cry, "Lord, save us; we perish"? And be sure that, in another than the sense they had time to think or dream of, they were saved. I would not try to suppress the instinct of man to cry out amidst his pain to God. I would rather try to develop it, certain that, the more man becomes conscious of a God everywhere around him and helpful at every point, the nearer will he be to the great Eternal Reality.

I said I should come back to the proposal of Professor Tyndall's friend. Every scientific man knows the value of entire and perfect accuracy in every experiment; indeed, the character and quality of the man as a student of science may be known quite as much from the sort of experiments he proposes, as from the experiments he performs. The slightest failure in any one element or arrangement spoils the whole. It is difficult to secure accuracy in a purely

[1] The wreck of the *Northfleet*.

physical test; but almost infinitely more difficult to secure it where many minds are concerned. And here we have two supreme difficulties—one belonging to each side of the experiment. Who could secure the exclusion of all within the prayerless ward from prayer? The man who would refuse to pray for the suffering would be no religious man. The wish that the diseased may be healed is native to every pious soul, and the wish is a prayer. You might secure a ward where men would be prayed for; you could not secure a ward where they would not. Were it possible to wall off a multitude of sufferers from the sympathies and prayers of the godly, that would be the most calamitous disproof of godliness which the wit of man had ever devised. But on the other side the difficulty is no less great. Prayer cannot live alone—it must be expressed in deed as well as speech. If words were prayers, they would be insignificant and impotent: prayer is the expressed passion of the spirit, taking shape, not simply in words, but in character, acts, and achievements. What would it mean in a case like this? Why, that all concerned with the healing of the sick was done as unto God. Instead of a careless nurse hardening by the sight of much suffering into callousness, mindful of her fee and her ease, neglectful of her patient, we should have a woman of pious soul, tender of heart, gentle of hand, with the soft voice which is so beautiful in woman, creating in what is now the cheerless wards of a charitable institution the cleanliness and comfort and silent, swift sympathies of home. Instead of the physician, prone to experiments, who is first a clinical professor and lecturer, and only second a healer of the diseases and sores of men, we should have a man who feels that the lives committed to him are as sacred as his own

—that for each he must give an account to God; that he ought to go to each bedside as to a religious place, where the noblest faculties should find their noblest, kindliest exercise. Let us have an hospital to match in all things the highest spiritual ideal—and this is necessary to make the experiment of any use whatever—place it alongside the ordinary surgical or medical wards, known more or less to us all; and I, for my part, am quite prepared to abide by the results. In such a case the results, I am certain, would transcend our highest expectations, not because a single physical law would be violated, but because the physical and spiritual laws of God would be in all things more perfectly fulfilled. But let us never dream that hard material tests can settle spiritual questions. The ultimate solution is, indeed, experimental; but the region of the experiment is in the living soul, which, so long as it lives and believes that over and above it broods the living God, will cry out to Him in all its trouble. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

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